



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 3.15PM ON
THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER 2015 AT THE OFFICE OF THE
NORTHERN IRELAND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
TEMPLE COURT, 39 NORTH STREET, BELFAST, BT1 1NA**

Present: Neil Bodger, Chairperson
Christine Collins
John Corey
Alan McBride

In attendance: Virginia McVea, Director
David Russell, Deputy Director
Lorraine Hamill, Finance and Administration
Manager
Barbara Smith, General Administrator
Amanda McMaw, ASM
Simon Burrows, Northern Ireland Office
Bilal Zahid, Northern Ireland Office (via
telephone)
Stephen Ferris, National Audit Office (via
telephone)

1.0 Apologies

Stephen Morffew, National Audit Office
Therese Murphy, Northern Ireland Office

2.0 Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

3.0 Chairman's Business

The Chairperson raised the issue of strategic risks for the organisation going forward and discussion followed in relation to three scenarios the Chairperson presented to the Committee. It was agreed the Chairperson would circulate further details to the Committee for responses by end January 2016. It was further agreed this item would be discussed at the March 2016 meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Action: Chairperson and Finance and Administration Manager

4.0 Minutes of the Meetings Held on 22 June 2015 and 6 July 2015

- 4.1 The minutes of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 22 June 2015 and 6 July 2015 were agreed.

5.0 Matters arising

- 5.1 *Fraud Awareness Training* – the Committee was advised that the Director and Deputy Director had attended this training. (Paragraph 3.5 of the 22 June 2015 minutes refers).
- 5.2 *Financial Procedures Manual* – tabled as an agenda item for discussion at the December 2015 Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting. (Paragraph 3.6 of the 22 June 2015 minutes refers).
- 5.3 *Absence Statistics* – the Committee was advised that the Deputy Principal, who had been on long-term sick leave, has now left the organisation. (Paragraph 5.3 of the 22 June 2015 minutes refers).

6.0 Internal Audit

- 6.1 *Communications Report*: ASM advised the Committee of a 'Satisfactory' assurance rating and gave an overview of the recommendations, all of which had been accepted by Management.

General discussion followed in relation to the Commission's communications initiatives via social media and the useful information gleaned via use of Google analytics.

In relation to item D1 on Page 8 of the report, the Commissioners on the Committee stressed the importance and usefulness of receiving the "daily digest" of news articles.

6.2 *Legal Services Report:* ASM advised the Committee of a 'Substantial' assurance rating and gave an overview of the recommendations, all of which had been accepted by Management.

The Chairperson congratulated the relevant staff.

General discussion followed in relation to the cross over between the information service and the legal database. The Director clarified the information service was used to track and monitor enquiries, whereas the legal database is a confidential record of casework. ASM reiterated that there were no concerns that there was a duplication of effort in relation to the two systems.

6.3 *IT, Information Security and Business Continuity Planning:* ASM advised the Committee of a 'Satisfactory' assurance rating and gave an overview of the recommendations, all of which had been accepted by Management.

General discussion followed in terms of measures taken by NIHRC to secure data and the procedures in place for the secure use of laptops and memory sticks.

6.4 *2015-2016 Progress Report:* The Committee was updated on progress against the 2015-16 Internal Audit Progress Report.

6.5 *Progress Report on Internal Audit Recommendations Outstanding from 2013-2014:* The Committee was updated on two outstanding actions:

(1) Fraud Awareness Training – now completed.

- (2) Financial Procedures Manual – completed as a draft for discussion at the December 2015 Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting.

7.0 Corporate Risk Register 2015-16

- 7.1 The Director updated the Committee on the Commission's risk register.

8.0 Finance and Administration Manager's Report

- 8.1 The Finance and Administration Manager reported on expenditure to 30 November 2015 including any variances.
- 8.2 The Committee noted the High Value Purchases to 30 November 2015.
- 8.3 The absence statistics as at 30 November 2015 were reviewed.

9. National Audit Office (NAO) Audit Planning Report on the 2015/16 Financial Statement Audit

- 9.1 The NAO provided an overview of the report, drawing particular attention to page 4 which details the risk based approach to conducting the audit and areas of focus.

10. Financial Procedures Manual

- 10.1 The Finance and Administration Manager advised the Committee that the manual was still in draft form, but that it had been updated in line with DFP guidance and the NIO framework.

The Committee agreed it had been a useful exercise and that it was a very comprehensive document. The Committee further agreed to email any comments to the Finance and Administration Manager. The NIO offered to review the document early in 2016.

General discussion followed in relation to processes for tendering, recruitment and new suppliers.

Action: Finance and Administration Manager

11. Business Continuity Plan

11.1 The Director provided an overview of the Business Continuity Plan and advised the Committee that it had been reviewed by the internal auditors, ASM. The Finance and Administration Manager advised the plan is reviewed on an annual basis and general discussion followed in relation to off-site back-up systems and the process for accessing this data.

The Committee agreed it was a very clear and concise document.

12. International Events

12.1 The Committee reviewed the international events attended by Commissioners and staff.

13. Expenses of the Chief Commissioner and the Director

13.1 The Committee reviewed the expenses of the Chief Commissioner and the Director.

14. Gifts and Hospitality Register

14.1 The Committee noted the gifts and hospitality provided and received for the period 1 April to 3 December 2015.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 The NIO requested submission of the Stewardship Statement. The Director confirmed this was completed and would be submitted on 18 December 2015.