

**COMMISSIONER FOR OLDER PEOPLE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (COPNI)**

**AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE  
HELD ON MONDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 9.30AM IN EQUALITY HOUSE,  
BELFAST**

**PRESENT:**

**MEMBERS**

Gerard Campbell (Chair)  
Julie Erskine  
Don Mackay  
Breidge Gadd

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Eddie Lynch (Commissioner, COPNI)  
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)  
Kathy Doey (Northern Ireland Audit Office)  
Deborah Park (Northern Ireland Audit Office)  
Brian Clerkin (ASM – Internal Audit)  
Noel Griffin (Department for Communities)  
Janet Smyth (Department for Communities)  
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)  
Rebecca Kelly (Office Manager, COPNI)

<p><b>Agenda Item 1: Apologies</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>There were no apologies.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</b></p> <p>a) <b><u>Conflict of Interests</u></b> No conflicts of interests were declared.</p> <p>b) <b><u>Fraud</u></b> No incidents of fraud were reported in this period.</p> <p>c) <b><u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u></b> No entries for this period.</p> <p>d) <b><u>Register of International Conferences &amp; Events</u></b> No entries for this period.</p> <p>e) <b><u>Direct Award Contracts</u></b> The record of direct award contracts during the period was noted and E Hoy explained the items.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 09/16/1a NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 09/16/1b NOTED</b></p> <p><b>ARAC 09/16/1c NOTED</b></p>

<p><b>f) <u>Whistleblowing</u></b> Nothing to report for this period.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/16/1c NOTED</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of the Meeting of 27 June 2016</b></p> <p>The minutes of the last ARAC meeting were approved by Members.</p> <p>J Smyth raised a concern on behalf of the Department for Communities, stating that the DfC did not understand the role of COPNI and its powers and duties. The Chair and Members welcomed this clarification. Following further discussion, Members agreed that the minutes accurately reflected the discussion that took place at the June meeting.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the Committee welcomed a senior representative of the DfC to attend COPNI ARAC meeting.</p> <p>The minutes were signed by the Chair and a copy will be published on the COPNI website.</p> <p><b><u>Actions arising from ARAC Meeting 27 June 2016</u></b></p> <p>All actions were reported as complete by the date of the meeting.</p> <p><b>a) <u>Act 124 - Quarterly Performance Report - ICT Assurance Statement to be brought to September meeting</u></b></p> <p>H Gault noted the ECNI's Internal Audit Annual Report for 2015/16 and the Business Continuity and IT Disaster Recovery. The Chair noted that that ECNI had been awarded a finding of substantial assurance. Members had a discussion regarding the need for an additional assurance letter and it was agreed that a specific letter of assurance be requested from ECNI.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/16/2</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>09/16/2b</p> <p>ACT 129</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Engagement</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner informed Members that he has been extremely busy and has been engaging with a wide range of stakeholders since coming into post.</p> <p>The Commissioner noted that he has had very positive meetings with a range of political parties and has received strong support for older people's issues. He said he has been focusing on two specific areas,</p>	<p>09/16/3a</p>

<p>the first is the absence of older people's issues in the consultation document of the PFG. He has been promoting the inclusion of a 15<sup>th</sup> high level outcome that seeks to "Protect, value and respect older people".</p> <p>The second important programme of activity is direct engagement with older people on the Commissioner's priorities for a 4 year Corporate Plan. The Commissioner has published a list of priorities across a wide range of older peoples' interests and is conducting public meetings, to which any older person may attend, to take their views on his proposals. The meetings are well attended and lively. The Commissioner's impression is that there is significant support for the issues he wishes to focus on, but he is awaiting the formal output of the public engagement before finalising a draft Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The Commissioner also noted that he has met with other stakeholders including NICCY &amp; ECNI.</p> <p>The Commissioner stated the current level of funding is not sufficient and that COPNI has highlighted to the Minister that the baseline budget will not support all the statutory duties to be undertaken. The Commissioner is in active discussion with the Department regarding additional in-year funding. The ARAC noted the continuing budget issues and the potential impact on the role of the Commissioner not being able to fulfil statutory duties.</p>	
<p><b>b) <u>Commissioners Proposed Priorities</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner gave a brief outline of the details of the priorities included in the papers and a useful discussion ensued.</p>	<p><b>09/16/3b</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>c) <u>Budget</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner noted that he had drafted a paper to the Department setting out COPNI's financial pressures this year. He will be meeting with the Department to continue discussions about additional support in-year and to open a discussion about baseline funding for the Corporate Plan period.</p> <p>E Hoy noted that one member of staff has asked for their job to be re-evaluated and that she is aware that other staff may request the same. She explained that the report that set the loading and grading of posts when the organisation was being set up (2012), referred to posts that were hypothetical. The report recommended a review of the grading and loading of posts when the organisation was fully staffed and operational. This has not been affordable within the current budget. There is a projected cost for this process of £15k (for all posts to be</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p>re-evaluated), however COPNI is considering how the process might be agreed and taken forward using existing internal and departmental resources.</p> <p>The Commissioner highlighted that COPNI's website does not currently meet accessibility requirements which is a significant reputational risk. The Commissioner explained that the current website maintenance is minimal and therefore is very inexpensive. The lack of robust maintenance also creates a security risk and the website's host server has been subject to a number of malicious attacks. Although none are aimed at COPNI, the website has been "crashed" a number of times in the last few months. A business case to upgrade the security and accessibility of the website is under development and it is envisaged that costs will be between £10-15K.</p> <p>Members had a discussion around the risks associated with the current level of underfunding of COPNI and the impacts the insufficient budget is having on the Commissioner's statutory duties.</p>	
<p><b>d) <u>Report on Chair and Members Annual Performance Assessments</u></b></p> <p>The Commissioner noted that all Committee Members' performance assessments are now complete and thanked the Chair for the reports. The Commissioner noted the excellent performance of all Members and thanked them for their continued support of the organisation.</p> <p>The Commissioner added that the Committee is to be reviewed in the new year with the intention of moving to a three Member Committee.</p> <p>The Chair noted that one Member has indicated their intention to stand down.</p>	<p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Update</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Recruitment and Induction</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy informed the Committee that, regrettably, COPNI has received resignation from one of the Legal Officers. Mr J Mackell is leaving to take up a post as Director of Complaints for the Law Society. His departure will be a great loss to the organisation as he has successfully managed a number of complex cases and is an excellent member of staff. E Hoy explained that COPNI intend to recruit a temporary legal officer until the formal recruitment campaign is underway.</p> <p>E Hoy noted that the Office Manager role will be a job share position from October 2016, when Eloise Gilmore returns from Maternity leave. Eloise will be sharing her job with a new member of staff, Agnieszka Wlodarska.</p>	<p><b>09/16/4a</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>

E Hoy explained that staff have drafted a letter seeking redress of the pay dispute. E Hoy noted that this has been forwarded to DFC. NIPSA are looking at the pay scale policy throughout other organisations. E Hoy informed the Committee that depending on the outcome, this could put pressure of up to £50k on COPNI's annual budget. The Chair queried if the additional £50k would have to be found in the existing budget. J Smyth confirmed that this is a possibility.

NOTED

**b) 2016/17 Finance and Expenditure**

E Hoy outlined expenditure to members and advised that the budget is the tightest it has ever been and COPNI are at the point of irreducibility. Members discussed the budget and advised management to continue regular discussions with the Department.

ARAC 09/16/4b

NOTED

J Smyth noted the projected £65k overspend was alarming. E Hoy explained that the current overspend position is £8k, but that the paper sent to the Department outlined additional pressures that could be reasonably foreseen to the year-end up to a value of £65k. J Smyth explained that when a budget is allocated, the Department do not expect any overspend. The Commissioner noted that COPNI is underfunded and the fundamental issue for the organisation is that it is not receiving the baseline funding to do the job. E Hoy and the Commissioner both gave reassurance that they would do everything possible to avoid a year end overspend position

**c) Quarterly Performance Report**

E Hoy advised that COPNI is normally requested to draft a Quarterly Performance Report to the Department but this has not yet been requested. E Hoy noted that COPNI presents a Quarterly Performance Report to the SMT internally.

NOTED

**d) Accountability Meeting**

E Hoy reported the Accountability meeting went well and there were no issues beyond the budget to report. She said that the budget was discussed at length and that COPNI has offered to provide any additional information required. She said that DfC have advised there may be some additional funding in-year and that the two organisations are working towards meeting some of the in-year pressures.

NOTED

NOTED

**e) Senior Management Team**

E Hoy confirmed that the Senior Management Team continue to meet monthly.

NOTED

ARAC 09/16/4c

<p><b>f) <u>Complaints</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that there have been no complaints for this quarter.</p> <p><b>g) <u>2016/17 Business Plan – Reporting on Progress</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that the business plan which was recast and resubmitted in August has not yet been approved.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 7: Update from DfC</b></p> <p>N Griffin noted that the agenda covered most updates. The Department are continuing to look at accountability reports and mechanisms so that the Department is not over-burdening arm's length bodies but still is able to report accurately and appropriately on business progress and risks. N Griffin said he will request reports when the Departmental position is clear.</p>	<b>NOTED</b>
<p><b>Agenda Item 8: Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements</b></p> <p>E Hoy noted that this is the first view of the Annual Report and Financial Statements to the Committee.</p> <p>A Member queried the rise in spend under publications. E Hoy confirmed this was for the launch of four large reports in 15/16. Members confirmed that the wording should be changed to 'research and publications'. E. Hoy agreed that it would more accurately represent the expenditure undertaken on advice to government and reports published.</p> <p>Members had a discussion around the draft report and commended COPNI for the hard work that goes into it. All Members and attendees were content with the draft report. The Chair asked anyone with any further comments or queries to email H Gault for clarity.</p> <p>It was agreed that the final report and the findings of the NIAO audit in the Report to Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG), would be the single agenda item brought to an extraordinary meeting of the Committee on 31 October. At that meeting the Committee will have a final opportunity for comment or query before the Annual Report and Accounts are finalised and sent for publication.</p>	<i>Act 130</i>
<p><b>Agenda Item 9: Update from NIAO</b></p> <p>D Park noted that the accounts are to be submitted to NIAO on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September. D Park confirmed that the audit fieldwork will commence on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September for a total of three weeks and the report (RTTCWG) following this will be submitted to COPNI on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October.</p>	<b>NOTED</b>

<p><b>Agenda Item 10: Audit Recommendations</b></p> <p>E Hoy noted that all outstanding internal and NIAO Audit recommendations have been actioned and reported to the Committee. The Audit tracker is now clear until the next round of audit reports arrive.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 09/16/6</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 11: Update from Internal Audit</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Internal Audit Report – Follow up review 16/17</u></b></p> <p>B Clerkin noted that the follow up review took place. There were 19 recommendations made. 17 were fully implemented, 1 was not accepted and 1 was partially implemented. B Clerkin was content that this closed the follow up review.</p> <p><b>b) <u>Internal Audit Report – Casework Management System</u></b></p> <p>B Clerkin updated the Committee that assurance ratings have changed and that there is no longer a substantial rating.</p> <p>B Clerkin noted the findings of the report; that the testing of the Casework Management System should be documented and that a procedures document should be drafted for the system.</p> <p>E Hoy confirmed that management were content with the audit report and that the system is working very well.</p> <p>B Clerkin confirmed that the audit report on a review of performance management will be presented in the December meeting.</p>	<p><b>ARAC 06/16/5a</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 12: Risk Matters</b></p> <p><b>a) <u>Draft Corporate Risk Strategy 16/17</u></b></p> <p>H Gault noted that a refinement was made to the Risk Strategy to reflect that there is no Corporate Plan in place presently. All Members and attendees were content with the strategy and the Commissioner will approve it following the meeting.</p> <p><b>b) <u>Corporate Risk Register 2016/17 Quarter 2</u></b></p> <p>E Hoy noted there is a Risk Management meeting every quarter with the Risk Analysis Team. E Hoy gave a summary of the risks.</p> <p>NG commented that the risk register included a different projected shortfall figure than the paper on pressures. E Hoy explained that this figure was the position as it was known at the time that the Risk Analysis meeting was undertaken so it was not unexpected that it</p>	<p><b>ARAC 09/16/7a</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p>

<p>would be different from a paper prepared for a different purpose some time later. The risk analysis, register and associated papers are a "snapshot" in time and are not changed after they have been compiled and signed off.</p> <p>The Chair asked if anyone had any queries. All Members were content and noted that it was a very comprehensive report.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 13: Update on DAO and DFD Guidance</b></p> <p>The report was noted. Members noted their appreciation for the summary report.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/16/8</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 14: COPNI updated Policies</b></p> <p>The updated policies were noted and Members were content.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/16/9</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 15: Summary of Key Issues from Public Accounts Committee Reports</b></p> <p>There were no issues applicable to COPNI during the period.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 16: Any Other Business</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that Members and attendees will have their annual meeting without management during the first half hour of the additional meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October.</p> <p>The Chair noted that Members had agreed to hold Committee meetings on Monday afternoon. This will commence in December.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p><b>Agenda Item 17: Dates of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>Proposed Dates of Next Meeting:</p> <p>Additional meeting 31 October (30-60 mins max)  5 December 2016  6 March 2017  5 June 2017</p>	<p>ARAC 09/16/10</p> <p>NOTED</p>

Signed:  
Chairperson



Date:

5/12/16