

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 10th MARCH 2014 AT 9.30AM IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Gerard Campbell (Chair)
Julie Erskine
Breidge Gadd
Don Mackay

APOLOGIES None

IN ATTENDANCE Claire Keatinge, Commissioner, COPNI
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive [CE] COPNI)
Gerard McKeown (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)
Christine Burns (NIAO)
Nicola Drennan (OFMDFM) (*Left at 12.05 am*)
Pauline Poots (ASM – Internal Audit)
Lorna Walker (COPNI)

<p>Agenda Item 1: Apologies There were no apologies.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business</p> <p>a) <u>Conflict of Interests</u> No conflicts of interests were reported in this period.</p> <p>b) <u>Fraud</u> No incidents of fraud were reported in this period.</p> <p>c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u> This was reviewed and signed by the Chair. A current copy will be put on the COPNI website.</p> <p>d) <u>Register of Interests</u> No interests were declared. The ARAC discussed best practice in relation to declaration of interests. It was agreed that the Register of Interests would be updated as required and formally reviewed on an annual basis, with any nil responses recorded. It was further agreed that the Register should include COPNI's Senior Management Team (SMT) as well as ARAC members.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 26)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 27)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 28)</p>

<p>e) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u> It was noted that one direct award contract had been entered into (with the International Longevity Centre for the amount of £6,000 + VAT). The CE reported that COPNI had followed all the relevant Central Procurement Directorate procedures in awarding this contract. The Representative from OFMDFM agreed to check the relevant Departmental guidance in relation to this issue and notify COPNI of any outstanding requirements. It was agreed that this should be added as a standing agenda item for each future ARAC meeting, with an accompanying paper showing any contracts awarded and that all relevant guidance and procedures have been followed.</p>	<p>NOTED</p> <p>ACTION OFMDFM (ACT 29)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 30)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of the meeting of 9 December 2013</p> <p>The minutes of the last ARAC meeting were discussed. A revision was requested under Item 3 (Draft Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 2013). It was agreed that the relevant paragraphs would be redrafted and submitted to the CE and ARAC for approval. When approved, the final version of the minutes would be signed by the Chair. Future minutes to revert to the previously agreed style.</p> <p>The Annex listing actions arising from the meeting was reviewed, with supporting information provided by the CE, as appropriate.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/1</p> <p>ACTION ARAC (ACT 31) ACTION Chair (ACT 32) NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not Already on Agenda</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Business Update – Emerging Issues</p> <p>The Commissioner gave an update on current issues affecting her office:</p> <p>Travel – no international travel in this period but extensive engagements in Northern Ireland. CE due to travel to Wales soon.</p> <p>Recruitment and Induction - The CE reported the new permanent appointments of Gerard McKeown (Finance and Governance Manager) and John Mackell (Legal Officer). Attendees offered their congratulations to these appointees. Six posts remained outstanding (2 Administration Officers, 1 Communications and Engagement Administration Officer, and 3 Policy Officers). The competition was underway for</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/2</p>

the 3 Administration Officer posts. Policy officers would be recruited at a later date, as resources permitted. The current group of temporary policy officers were working successfully and this continued to mitigate any associated risk. The induction process was currently being reviewed within the internal audit (IA) plan. It was agreed that the ARAC would meet briefly with staff at the next or a subsequent ARAC meeting.

ACTION
ARAC (ACT 33)

Finance and Expenditure – the relevant paper was introduced and discussed. COPNI would be commencing use of a Sage accounting package from April 2014, and, as a result, from then all financial matters would be internally managed (except salaries). Attendees discussed the breakdown of COPNI's expenditure and the risks attached to the current uncertainty about future budget levels.

ARAC 03/14/2

NOTED

Quarterly Performance Report – ARAC Members recorded their thanks to staff for providing this report, which provided very useful additional assurance information. In response to an enquiry, IA explained that in the absence of a Board and in the interests of good governance, it was beneficial for the ARAC to have sight of ongoing performance information. The Chair acknowledged that it was important that the ARAC have a sufficient knowledge and understanding of COPNI's business and decision making processes in order that ARAC fulfils its responsibilities in terms of audit, governance, accountability and risk management.

ARAC 03/14/2b
NOTED

NIAO Audit – the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2013 had now been published and laid before the Assembly.

NOTED

Accountability Meeting – there were no issues arising from the last meeting, except that the 2013/14 Business Plan had still not received Departmental approval. It had been agreed with the Department that COPNI should continue to work against the draft Plan. The ARAC recorded that this was a totally unacceptable situation. The representative from OFMDFM said that officials in the Department accepted this view and had made it clear that early sign off of the 2014/15 Business Plan was required. All agreed that this was necessary.

NOTED

ACTION
OFMDFM (ACT 34)

Active Ageing Strategy (AAS) progress – the AAS had been launched at the Pensioner's Parliament on 21 February, with Junior Ministers present. The Commissioner would continue to chair the advisory group. (Members of that group were now wondering what their future role will

<p>be).</p> <p>Senior Management Team – all departmental heads were now submitting reports and meeting on a monthly basis.</p> <p>COPNI Business Plan 2014/15 – the CE summarised the contents of the Business Plan. The ARAC discussed the document in detail and made comments/ suggestions for revisions, as appropriate. The draft Plan had already been sent to OFMDFM for comment before submission. It was agreed that the representative from OFMDFM would arrange a meeting between the relevant COPNI and Departmental officials to take this forward. It was also agreed that the Budget Summary would be prepared and sent out to the ARAC.</p>	<p>ACTION OFMDFM (ACT 35)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 36)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6: Update from OFMDFM</p> <p>All relevant business under this item had already been discussed or would be dealt with during the remainder of this meeting.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 7: Update from Internal Audit 2013/2014</p> <p>a) COPNI Corporate Governance and Risk Management report IA presented a high level summary of the report and all present noted its recommendations. The ARAC congratulated the Commissioner and her team in COPNI on receiving a satisfactory assurance rating from IA. However, the ARAC expressed its disappointment that, if it had not been for the Priority 2 recommendations in relation to the failure to have its Business Plan / Corporate Plan approved, COPNI could have been awarded a substantial assurance rating.</p> <p>b) COPNI IA Progress Report Feb 2014 IA reported on the progress of their fieldwork and follow-up work. It was hoped that the final report would be presented at the next ARAC meeting, together with other papers (Performance against KPIs 2013/14, Annual Assurance Statement, Proposed IA Plan 2014 / 15). IA had also met with the Head of IA in OFMDFM who would be conducting an internal audit review on the work of ASM on COPNI. IA would report any outputs from that review to the ARAC.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/3a</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 03/14/3b</p> <p>ACTION IA / COPNI / ARAC (ACT 37)</p> <p>ACTION IA (ACT 38)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 8:</p> <p>Risk Strategy - The CE introduced the document which was discussed by the ARAC. Suggestions for minor revisions were made and it was felt that this was a helpful document. The ARAC asked for the revised paper to be</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/4a</p> <p>ACTION COPNI / ARAC (ACT</p>

<p>presented again at its March 2015 meeting.</p> <p>Updated Corporate Risk Register - The CE summarised the main elements of the Risk Register. The Register would be presented at subsequent ARAC meetings with a column added showing any changes made since the previous version. IA commented that it would be expected that the risk appetite(s) would be defined more as the Risk Register developed. The Chair said that the document had been significantly improved. <i>(Nicola Drennan left the meeting at this time)</i>. There followed a detailed discussion on each Risk, with comments/ suggestions for revisions made by those present. ARAC members thanked all concerned for their work in preparing the current document.</p>	<p>39)</p> <p>ARAC 03/14/4b</p> <p>ACTION COPNI / IA (ACT 40)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9: Update on DAO and DFD Guidance</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/5 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Summary of key issues from PAC Reports</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/6 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: Procedures for Secretariat Support ARAC (February 2014)</p> <p>The ARAC gave its approval to these revised procedures and recorded its thanks for the excellent secretariat support received from COPNI's staff and for the quality and timeliness of the papers produced for each meeting.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/7</p> <p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 12: Draft Schedule of Proposed Meetings for 2014/15</p> <p>ARAC Members to consider the proposed dates in the draft schedule and send back to confirm. It was agreed that, when the 2014/ 15 schedule was confirmed, COPNI staff would make the necessary arrangements for the Chair to conduct his annual meeting with the Internal and External Auditors.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/8</p> <p>ACTION ARAC (ACT 41)</p> <p>ACTION COPNI (ACT 42)</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 14: Date of Next Meeting/Schedule of Meetings</p> <p>The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 30 June 2014 at 9.30am in Equality House.</p>	<p>ARAC 03/14/9</p> <p>NOTED</p>

Signed:
Chairperson



Date: 22/9/14