

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 4 DECEMBER 2017 AT 1.30PM
IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS Gerard Campbell (Chair)
Joseph Campbell
Professor Dolores O'Reilly

IN ATTENDANCE Eddie Lynch (Commissioner, COPNI)
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)
Noel Griffin (Department for Communities)
Jonathan Buick (ASM – Internal Audit)
Peter O'Sullivan (Northern Ireland Audit Office) *from item 5(b)*
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI)

Agenda Item 1: Apologies There were no apologies.	NOTED
Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business	
a) <u>Conflicts of Interest</u> There were no conflicts of interest.	NOTED
b) <u>Fraud</u> No incidents were reported in this period.	NOTED
c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u> The nine items were noted and it was signed by the Chair.	ARAC 12/17/2c NOTED
d) <u>Register of International Conferences & Events</u> There were no items for this period.	NOTED
e) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u> The five items were noted.	ARAC 12/17/2e NOTED

<p>f) <u>Whistleblowing</u></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of Meetings & Action Tracker</p> <p>a) <u>Draft Minutes of 4th September 2017</u></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and the Chair signed the minutes.</p> <p>b) <u>Draft Minutes of 31st October 2017</u></p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and the Chair signed the minutes.</p> <p>c) <u>Action Tracker for 31st October 2017</u></p> <p>Five of the actions were noted as complete, and the sixth action (ACT152) had been completed since the report was circulated.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/3</p> <p>ARAC 12/17/3a NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 12/17/3b NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 12/17/3c NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising not already on the Agenda</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5: Commissioner's Update</p> <p>a) <u>Engagement</u></p> <p>The Commissioner gave a brief overview of his recent engagements. He spoke at a Retired Teachers' Association meeting, a Unison Planning for Retirement event, and a U3A conference. He presented the Queen's Award at the Mid and East Antrim Age well Partnership celebration event. He attended the Southern HSC Trust's new day care launch, a public meeting about the impact of driver licensing changes on transport services, the Law Society's Elder Law conference, a NICOLA report launch, the All Ireland Civil Dialogue on Brexit, Fire Safety week launch, and the Dementia Friendly Awards. He met with Kellie Armstrong MLA regarding domiciliary care, and with Emma Little Pengelly MP regarding WASPI women's pensions.</p> <p>There was significant media coverage in the previous week regarding domiciliary care, and Members noted the Commissioner's strong public profile.</p> <p>The winners of the Christmas Card artwork and verse were judged today.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/5</p> <p>NOTED</p>

b) Accountability Meeting

Mr O'Sullivan joined the meeting.

The meeting held on 17 November considered COPNI's revised Business Plan 2017/18 and draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The Commissioner will update the ARAC meeting in March 2018 on the Arms' Length Body governance report which he has received from the DfC.

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The Commissioner referred to the DfC sponsorship team. D Malcolm retains responsibility for COPNI assisted by J Smyth. N Griffin will move to a different role and his post will be recruited in 2018.

The Chair thanked N Griffin for his contribution to the Committee over the last two years.

c) Budget 2017/18

NOTED

The DfC has approved an additional £79,000 for the Investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home. This brings the total budget for the investigation to £104,000.

COPNI has made additional bids for £10,000 resource and £10,000 capital. This brings this year's total budget to £941,000.

d) Draft Corporate Plan 2016-2020

**ARAC 12/17/5d
NOTED**

The Commissioner referred to the document which has been submitted to the DfC. He highlighted the three themes: (1) Supporting our Ageing Population by Promoting Positive Ageing & Ending Age Discrimination; (2) Better Health & Social Care; (3) Tackling Financial Abuse and Scams & Protecting Older Victims of Crime. Each of the nine Priorities for Action were linked to a statutory duty. A significant amount of work has already commenced, however the Investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home has caused some time pressures.

He explained the Corporate Plan can only be formally signed off by a Minister, therefore due to the current political situation the Plan cannot yet be published.

The Chair highlighted this Plan covers the Commissioner's current term and he hoped it would receive Ministerial approval and be launched soon. He asked for comments from Members.

J Campbell asked about any consultation for the Plan. E Hoy explained COPNI had formally engaged with older people on the 'long list' of priorities via six events across Northern Ireland in 2016. When the Corporate Plan is launched there will be further engagement but not formal consultation. J Campbell suggested including this in the

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document. E Hoy confirmed that statutory bodies are aware in general of COPNI's priorities.

D O'Reilly asked how COPNI will measure its success in achieving outcomes. E Hoy explained this had been given significant consideration however due to the nature of COPNI's statutory advice to government, it was not always possible to capture success, or influence for change within the lifespan of the Corporate Plan. In addition she noted there is no Programme for Government to work alongside, and COPNI is not a service delivery body. However, she said that outputs such as legal casework and other project deliverables will be measured. Before the draft plan is published there may be a further opportunity to align it with a draft Programme for Government (on the return of an Executive and Assembly in NI).

The Chair noted the section on political uncertainty would be revised in due course, and stated it was a good Corporate Plan.

N Griffin indicated the DfC was broadly content and have asked for minor changes to be made in order to comply with the Management and Financial Statement Memorandum.

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Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Update – Emerging Issues

ARAC 12/17/6

a) Staffing Issues

NOTED

The recruitment competitions for the Communications and Engagement Manager (SO grade) and the Legal Officer (DP grade) were complete. Each recruitment panel included an external member. Christy Hunter and Joanne McGaffin have been appointed in the respective roles.

A Policy and Research Officer left post in late October to take up a position in another Arms' Length Body at a higher grade. An exit interview was completed. Members wished the member of staff well in her new role and noted the loss to the organisation. The post (SO grade) will be advertised in early 2018.

One member of staff is on long-term sick leave. COPNI has received an occupational health report and does not expect the staff member to return to work before Christmas 2017.

The Pay Remit for 2016/17 was approved by the Department of Finance, and was included in November's payroll. All staff are now on the minimum point of the relevant scale for their grade.

b) Senior Management Team

The Team meets monthly to discuss the budget and governance, and is also the steering group for the Investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home.

c) Finance and Expenditure 2017/18

The Management Accounts for the period to 31 October 2017 show a pressure of £24,130. The DfC has approved £25,000 plus £79,000 for the Investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home. COPNI has recently bid for £10,000 resource and £10,000 capital. This will bring this total budget for 2017/18 to £941,000. Investigation expenditure was being closely monitored. There was no significant expenditure outside of the investigation. The projection to 31 March 2018 was £939,616. The salary for the vacant Policy and Research Officer post was being used for other expenditure. COPNI was still accruing for the 54% rent increase.

The Chair noted the good lines of communication with the DfC regarding investigation expenditure.

d) Investigation Expenditure Summary

The total expenditure to October 2017 was £36,804, with £80,750 to be spent. The Expert Panel was impressed with the work done by the investigation team during the summer, and several Expert Panel meetings are being held from late November to January.

e) Quarterly Performance Report July - September 2017

This report was accurate as of 30 September 2017. Some objectives were recast into the revised Business Plan and were now marked as achieved or on target. E Hoy explained the absenteeism section.

The good Report To Those Charged With Governance received from the NI Audit Office was noted.

f) Quarterly Assurance Statement July - September 2017

The report was noted.

g) Business Plan 2017/18 (revised)

E Hoy indicated this had been submitted to the DfC on 1 November 2017 and highlighted the revisions. The DfC had accepted the changes. The total projected expenditure for 2017/18 was £921,372 (this excludes the additional bid of £20,000). COPNI expected to transition into normal operations early in the 2018/19 year.

**ARAC 12/17/6c
NOTED**

**ARAC 12/17/6d
NOTED**

**ARAC 12/17/6e
NOTED**

**ARAC 12/17/6f
NOTED**

**ARAC 12/17/6g
NOTED**

J Campbell noted that the revised plan presented a better presentation of the Commissioner's work in the year.

h) Business Plan 2017/18 – Progress on Objectives

**ARAC 12/17/6h
NOTED**

The 11 objectives were noted as being on target.

i) Business Plan 2018/19 – Update

E Hoy highlighted that the DfC had absorbed the 4% cut to COPNI's budget in 2017/18. The projected expenditure for 2017/18 was £921,372. The 2018/19 business plan assumes an opening budget allocation of £785,000. The plan is being drafted highlighting the immediate pressure.

E Hoy appreciated the willingness of the DfC to discuss the finances for 2018/19. She will circulate the draft Business Plan to the Committee for comments in January 2018.

J Campbell expressed concern regarding COPNI's budget for 2018/19. The Chair highlighted that increases in National Insurance, salaries and rent will apply next year. He noted the support of the DfC and asked N Griffin to continue to work with senior management on the budget.

N Griffin indicated the DfC was supportive however it is restrained by the political situation and consequent budget uncertainty.

E Hoy indicated COPNI would now have to submit a business case for each project now and this went against the Commissioner's powers and duties, and had a significant impact on resources both in COPNI and the DfC.

E Hoy said that the draft Business Plan for 2018/19 will be circulated to ARAC members in January to note and if desired, to comment, prior to its submission to the DfC by 31 January 2018. The Committee agreed to review by email.

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j) Business Continuity Plan Test 16th October 2017

**ARAC 12/17/6j
NOTED**

E Hoy indicated the test of the Business Continuity Plan had gone well. There had been an amber weather warning for Northern Ireland due to Storm Ophelia. Members commended the team involved in the test.

k) Complaints

No new complaints were received in this period.

<p>Agenda Item 7: Risk Matters</p> <p>a) <u>Corporate Risk Register Quarter 3 2017/18</u></p> <p>E Hoy indicated all risks were well controlled. She detailed the background to the higher risks and these were discussed.</p> <p>b) <u>Dunmurry Manor Investigation Risk Register</u></p> <p>E Hoy tabled this document which was discussed and changes to key risks were noted. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, Members and Attendees handed it back at the end of this item.</p> <p>J Campbell noted this was an excellent piece of work in identifying, treating and managing the risks inherent in the investigation.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/7</p> <p>ARAC 12/17/7a NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 12/17/7b NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 8: Update from Department for Communities</p> <p>N Griffin indicated there was nothing further to report from the DfC. Members were content that COPNI and the DfC were communicating well.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9: Update from Northern Ireland Audit Office</p> <p>P O'Sullivan indicated he would bring the External Audit Strategy to the ARAC meeting in March 2018.</p> <p>H Gault indicated the invoice for 2016/17 from the NI Audit Office was lower than expected due to time savings.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted the good working relationship between COPNI and the NI Audit Office, and the excellent Report To Those Charged With Governance.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Update from Internal Audit</p> <p>a) <u>Follow up Review</u></p> <p>J Buick confirmed the majority of work for 2017/18 was complete.</p> <p>The Follow Up Review for internal audits completed in 2016/17 covered Case Management and Performance Management.</p> <p>Case Management had two priority 3 recommendations. One was unable to be tested as there were no further system implementation projects, and the other was fully implemented.</p> <p>Performance Management had three priority 3 recommendations. One was not implemented; ASM appreciated there was little merit in COPNI completing a retrospective exercise for this and Members supported</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/10</p> <p>ARAC 12/17/10a NOTED</p>

COPNI's decision. The other two recommendations were fully implemented.

The one recommendation outstanding from 2015/16 was fully implemented.

Members were content with the report.

b) Human Resource Management Report

**ARAC 12/17/10b
NOTED**

J Buick outlined the scope of the audit: Policies and Procedures; Attendance Management; Recruitment and Selection Processes; Staff training and development. Overall this was a satisfactory report. There were eight priority 3 recommendations which were all accepted by COPNI.

E Hoy explained a small number of non-critical HR policies had not been reviewed due to the Investigation into Dunmurry Manor Care Home taking priority in recent months. This had also affected the amount of training delivered to staff.

Members were content with the report.

c) IT General Controls Report

**ARAC 12/17/10c
NOTED**

J Buick indicated this internal audit included COPNI's preparation for the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which comes into law in May 2018, and Business Continuity. There were eight priority 3 recommendations which had been accepted by COPNI. Overall this was a satisfactory report.

The Chair highlighted he was reassured by the thoroughness of ASM in its internal audits.

Agenda Item 11: Audit Recommendations – Progress to date

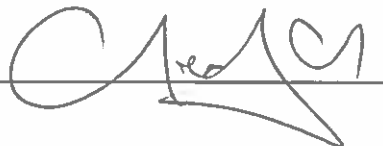
**ARAC 12/17/11
NOTED**

The report was noted. H Gault confirmed that the targets for December will be met on time. In response to a query from J Campbell, E Hoy confirmed that COPNI is complying with the Data Protection Act regarding all information it holds as part of the Investigation into Dunmurry Care Home, and is preparing for the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which come into law in May 2018.

In response to a query from N Griffin about internal audit recommendations that are not accepted and not implemented by COPNI, J Buick confirmed these will be included in the annual assurance report. The Chair indicated these will disappear from the audit recommendation tracker after they are seen by the Committee.

<p>Agenda Item 12: Accountability and Financial Management Guidance Update</p> <p>The item in the report was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/12 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Review of ARAC Terms of Reference</p> <p>E Hoy indicated this document had been revised when this Committee began in April 2017. The Chair confirmed a written report of the Committee's activities during 2017/18 should be submitted to the ARAC meeting in June 2018.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/13 NOTED</p> <p>ACT 157</p>
<p>Agenda Item 14: COPNI Updated Policies</p> <p>The four policies listed in the report were noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 12/17/14 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 15: Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 16: Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held on Monday 5th March 2018 at 1.30pm.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 4.00pm.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

**Signed:
Chairperson**



Date:

5/3/18

