

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 2 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 1.30PM
IN EQUALITY HOUSE, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS

Professor Dolores O'Reilly (Acting Chair)
Joseph Campbell

IN ATTENDANCE

Eddie Lynch (Commissioner, COPNI)
Evelyn Hoy (Chief Executive, COPNI)
Bernie Rooney (Department for Communities)
Martin Walker (Department for Communities)
Claire Lowe (Northern Ireland Audit Office)
Andrew Moore (Northern Ireland Audit Office)
Dr Rosemary Peters Gallagher OBE (Moore (N.I.) LLP –
Internal Audit)
Helen Gault (Finance and Governance Manager, COPNI)
Eloise Gilmour (Office Manager, COPNI)

Agenda Item 1: Apologies An apology was received from Gerard Campbell (Chair).	NOTED
Agenda Item 2: Chair's Business	
a) <u>Conflicts of Interest</u> No conflicts of interest were declared.	NOTED
b) <u>Fraud</u> No incidents were reported in this period.	NOTED
c) <u>Register of Gifts and Hospitality</u> The four items were noted and it was signed by D O'Reilly.	ARAC 09/19/2c APPROVED
d) <u>Register of International Conferences & Events</u> There were no items for this period. COPNI was now a member of the International Ombudsman Institute.	NOTED

<p>e) <u>Direct Award Contracts</u></p> <p>The single item was noted.</p> <p>f) <u>Whistleblowing</u></p> <p>No incidents were reported in this period.</p> <p>g) <u>Annual Report on the Committee for 2018/19</u></p> <p>The report prepared by G Campbell was noted. The 2018/19 ARAC Self-Assessment Checklist has been completed by G Campbell with input from Members.</p> <p>The seamless transition in the internal audit service from ASM to Moore Stephens was noted.</p> <p>D O'Reilly, on behalf of G Campbell, thanked the DfC for their contribution to Committee meetings over the past year.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/2e NOTED</p> <p>NOTED</p> <p>ARAC 09/19/2g NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 3: Draft Minutes of Meetings & Action Tracker</p>	
<p>a) <u>Draft Minutes of 3rd June 2019</u></p> <p>E Hoy explained that the two issues reported to the previous meeting under 'Complaints' had not actually met COPNI's threshold within its Complaints Policy. The issues had been informally resolved within a short time period to the clients' satisfaction. E Hoy therefore requested the minutes be amended to reflect that no complaints were reported to the previous meeting. The amendment was made.</p> <p>Those present accepted the accuracy of the minutes, and they were signed by the Chair.</p> <p>b) <u>Action Tracker for 3rd June 2019</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising from the previous meeting.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/3a APPROVED</p> <p>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 tabled a list of his engagements over the past three months. These included the launches of the B-Friend Hub in Omagh, a Women's Aid project, and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's</p>	<p>NOTED</p>

Erasmus and Age Friendly Economy project. The Commissioner spoke at the North Belfast Men's Shed, the National Pensioners Convention in Blackpool, an Age Friendly Belfast Loneliness event, Strandtown Probus Club and the Chinese Welfare Association. He also attended an event held by Ardmonagh Elderly Services and Good Morning West Belfast at Belfast City Hall.

TV Licence

In February COPNI had responded to the BBC's consultation on age related TV Licence policy. The Commissioner also wrote to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and to the Minister for Sport, Civil Society and Loneliness to express his concerns about the proposal to end the TV licence concession for people aged over 75.

The Commissioner made several media appearances in June in response to the BBC's announcement that from June 2020 it will remove free licences for people aged over 75 (unless they are in receipt of Pension Credit). Many older people have expressed their dissatisfaction with the announcement during the Commissioner's recent engagements.

M Walker indicated broadcasting was not a devolved issue therefore the TV licence matter had not come to the DfC.

b) Accountability Meeting

The Accountability meeting was held on 23 July.

c) Budget 2019/20

The Commissioner was delighted to announce the DfC had confirmed an additional £50,000 allocation for the 2019/20 year which increased the budget to £889,000. The baseline budget for 2020/21 will be £950,000. Most of the additional £50,000 for this year will be spent on preparatory work for projects which will be carried out in 2020/21. The Commissioner thanked the DfC for the additional funding.

B Rooney thanked the Commissioner and his staff for their support to the DfC during its application to the Department of Finance. This was a good example of partnership working. COPNI's full compliance with audit had been an important factor in the approval of increased funding. B Rooney has signed the Accounting Officer letter.

The DfC Permanent Secretary, who is responsible for the Active Ageing Strategy, has asked the Commissioner to do a platform piece on Northern Ireland's rapidly increasing ageing population. It is being organised by the DfC press office. It will be released to all NI Civil

NOTED

NOTED

Service departments and the media, and will coincide with the International Day of Older People on 1 October.

B Rooney indicated the DfC will cover the pension deficit for COPNI on a recurring basis.

D O'Reilly and J Campbell thanked B Rooney and her team for understanding COPNI's genuine need for an increase in funding, and for her personal tenacity.

d) Report on Chair and Members' Annual Performance Assessments

NOTED

The 2018/19 assessments of J Campbell and D O'Reilly have been completed by G Campbell. G Campbell's assessment by the Commissioner will be rescheduled due to illness.

e) Dunmurry Manor Care Home: Post-Investigation Work

NOTED

The Commissioner had set a deadline of 1 July for the relevant authorities to respond. Runwood Homes' legal team responded by 1 July. The Department of Health, on behalf of other relevant authorities, requested an extension to 30 September. The Commissioner agreed to this and also requested detailed responses.

COPNI has met several times with the DoH's Independent Review Team. The Commissioner had a positive meeting with the Chief Social Services Officer (DoH) in August.

In June the Commissioner sent an update to families involved in the investigation to explain the status of the post-investigation work. He plans to invite families to a briefing and issue a press release later this year.

Investigations by the PSNI and Nursing and Midwifery Council are ongoing.

J Campbell highlighted that the RQIA has taken a more proactive approach with care homes in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area in recent months.

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

a) Staffing Issues

NOTED

The Personal Secretary and Administration Officer posts were successfully recruited and the staff have commenced.

Two staff have resigned and will leave their posts later this month: the Human Resources Manager and a Legal Officer. They have each

obtained higher grade posts in other public bodies. COPNI may recruit temporary agency staff to cover the posts in the short-term.

J Campbell highlighted staff retention was a significant risk to the organisation and asked whether the outstanding job evaluation and grading process was a contributing factor to resignations. E Hoy advised that the lack of pay progression was a greater issue for staff, and the Commissioner will meet the DoF Permanent Secretary in September regarding this. B Rooney indicated the pay progression matter had been delegated from the DoF to the DfC which is seeking to resolve the matter before the end of 2019. It was with the DfC's lawyers, and she understood the legal position is particular to COPNI. E Hoy thanked B Rooney for her support.

b) Senior Management Team

The SMT had met twice since the previous Committee meeting, and had focused on business planning.

c) Finance and Expenditure 2019/20

The management accounts for the period to 31 July did not reflect the additional £50,000, as it was approved during August. Part of this will be used to convene two further meetings of the Expert Panel, and to carry out preparatory work for projects which will commence in the 2020/21 year.

B Rooney confirmed COPNI may submit business cases during the year.

d) Quarterly Performance Report April – June 2019

The report was noted.

e) Quarterly Assurance Statement April – June 2019

The report was noted.

f) Business Plan 2019/20 – Progress on Objectives

COPNI intends to use most of the additional £50,000 for preparatory work for projects starting in April 2020: scoping papers, business cases, technical advice from experts, development of procurement papers and roundtables. The two largest projects will be the Adult Safeguarding Bill and the Cost of Care. Other projects are nursing home regional contracts, and support services for carers of people living with dementia. The Commissioner's Corporate Plan ends in June 2020.

M Walker is working on a review of the Active Ageing Strategy, and the DfC will engage with COPNI.

NOTED

ARAC 09/19/6c
NOTED

ARAC 09/19/6d
NOTED

ARAC 09/19/6e
NOTED

ARAC 09/19/6f
NOTED

<p>g) <u>Complaints</u></p> <p>There were no complaints in the period.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>h) <u>ECNI Annual Assurance Letter 2018/19</u></p> <p>The letter dated 3rd July 2019 to the Commissioner from the Chief Executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland was noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/6h NOTED</p>
<p>i) <u>Premises Move in 2021</u></p> <p>E Hoy requested this be a new standard agenda item. As reported at the previous meeting, COPNI and other bodies within Equality House plan to relocate to another building in Belfast in May 2021. COPNI staff have visited a pilot of agile working. The DfC has allocated accommodation support to COPNI. The rent should decrease for the new premises however there may be one-off expenditure on technology.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>j) <u>Communications</u></p> <p>COPNI's social media channels now have a regular feature 'Words of Wisdom' from older people who have been interviewed by COPNI. The broadcaster Eamonn Holmes and his mother have been interviewed by COPNI. This interview, and one with Lady Mary Peters, will be released to coincide with the International Day of Older People on 1 October.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 7: Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements 2018/19</p> <p>The Annual Report includes a reference to the planned increase in the baseline budget from 2020/21. B Rooney indicated she will ask the Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning and Resources Group to consider the reference before the report is finalised, and stated it was a very good report.</p> <p>The report also reflects the publication of the Home Truths report and post-investigation work during 2018/19, as well as routine operations. The complexity of legal casework has increased. All objectives within the performance report were complete, with the exception of 'Pilot scheme for 75 year old support visit - Partnership with QUB'. This was due to Queen's University Belfast not yet having its research grant in place and was therefore outside of COPNI's control.</p> <p>The NIAO commenced its fieldwork this week.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/7 NOTED</p>
<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>B Rooney suggested COPNI could better highlight how it effectively assists older people who make contact. J Campbell suggested that</p>	<p>ACT 172</p>

<p>COPNI include a reference to clients having given their consent for their anonymised cases to be included in the report, and that these are real cases. C Lowe and H Gault indicated they would discuss how to word the going concern item in the Financial Statements.</p> <p>D O'Reilly commended the report and thanked E Hoy and H Gault.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 8: Risk Matters</p> <p>a) <u>Corporate Risk Register Quarter 2 2019/20</u></p> <p>D O'Reilly welcomed the positive changes in the register due to the additional funding. E Hoy noted the Staff Retention risk had changed since the register was done, due to two resignations. The premises move risk had decreased from high to medium since June.</p> <p>A new issue had arisen for COPNI: dual registration of nursing homes. COPNI was in correspondence with the NI Human Rights Commission.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/8a NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9: Update from Department for Communities</p> <p>There was nothing further to report.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10: Update from Northern Ireland Audit Office</p> <p>Fieldwork commenced this week.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 11: Update from Internal Audit</p> <p>Fieldwork will commence in November for the Corporate Governance internal audit. The terms of reference will be agreed by the end of September.</p>	<p>NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 12: Audit Recommendations – Progress to date</p> <p>It was noted one recommendation was still within its target period. The other two recommendations had passed their implementation date, due to a lack of projects caused by funding constraints. However they would be implemented for the next project initiation document.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/12 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 13: Accountability and Financial Management Guidance Update</p> <p>The six items in the report were noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/13 NOTED</p>
<p>Agenda Item 14: COPNI Updated Policies</p> <p>The two policies listed in the report were noted.</p>	<p>ARAC 09/19/14 NOTED</p>

