

## Minutes of Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting held on 16 November 2021 @ 10am

**In attendance:** Kieran Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)

Rodney Allen (COO)

Patrick Barr (Director)

Colette Kane (Director)

Brian O'Neill (Director)

Suzanne Walsh (Director)

Tomas Wilkinson (Director)

Louise Donnelly (Secretary)

Evelyn Collins (Equality Commission) - agenda item 4

**Apologies:** Neil Gray (Director)

No.	Topic
1.	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies were recorded from Neil Gray.
2.	<b>Declaration of Conflicts of Interest</b> There were no issues declared by members.
3.	<b>Minutes of Previous meeting and Matters Arising</b> Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 October 2021 were agreed and the matters arising noted as updated.
4.	<b>The work of the Equality Commission – Evelyn Collins</b> Evelyn Collins was welcomed to the meeting and introduced to members by Rodney Allen. The following key areas were discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas of mutual interest in respective work</li> <li>• Section 75 duties - issues about effective implementation by public authorities and as a governance issue</li> <li>• shared thinking and update on the possible use of Governance Statements for accounting officers to confirm compliance with the duties.</li> </ul> The C&AG thanked Evelyn and looked forward to continued constructive and close working relations between NIAO and the Commission.
5.	<b>Contract Management</b> Tomas Wilkinson presented a Tender Evaluation Report to SMT for consideration. Discussion followed concerning the cost of the winning bids and any potential for conflicts of interest. SMT in discussing the cost implications also considered the extent any other option was feasible.  SMT approved the Tender Evaluation report and endorsed the issue of notification letters to all successful bidders.  The C&AG commended the work of the Tender Evaluation Team in this exercise and recommended that consideration should be given to an induction seminar for the new

No.	Topic
	contractors appointed which could focus on items such as regularity, propriety and standards in public life.
6.	<b>Management Information Report</b> The interactive performance report detailing key performance outturns for the public reporting and financial audit programmes to November 2021 was presented. The position in relation to backlog accounts will continue to be monitored by the Operational Management Team (OMT) and the C&AG will be updated accordingly.
7.	<b>BTP Phase 2 - Updated actions related to Investors in People (IIP)</b> Rodney Allen presented a report to update members on actions related to the IIP report. SMT endorsed the proposal to procure the services of an external consultant to support specific areas identified as a result of feedback from the IIP report.
8.	<b>Corporate Report</b> Brian O'Neill provided an overview on the current position with regard to Finance, HR and Business Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Finance</b>  <b>2020-21</b> - Members were asked to note the current budgetary position and requirements for the January monitoring round.  <b>Refurbishment of 106 University Street</b> – Work continues on the refurbishment, the project is currently on schedule and with no significant issues to date. Consideration is currently being given to acquiring a tenant for the separate office space in the building.             </li> <li>• <b>HR</b>  <b>Recruitment</b> – Auditor and Graduate Trainee Accountant recruitment exercises are currently underway.  <b>Attendance Management</b> - Members noted absence figures per employee in the rolling period 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021.  <b>Annual Leave uptake</b> - Members noted the position on annual leave balances at 30 November 2021.  <b>Training</b> - Members noted the training events attended by staff.             </li> <li>• <b>Business Support</b>              Members were updated were on Information Management, Governance, Communications and Assembly Support.  <b>Complaints</b> – one complaint is currently being investigated.             </li> </ul>
9.	<b>Handling Correspondence Quarterly Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MLA Correspondence</b></li> <li>• <b>Raising Concerns</b></li> </ul> Brian O'Neill presented a report to inform SMT on progress regarding MLA Correspondence and Raising Concerns cases. Discussion followed concerning the timescales and status of live cases.
10.	<b>Technical Report</b> Suzanne Walsh provided an update on the following key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ISQM</b> – work is progressing well, an update will be provided to OMT in the coming weeks.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FAM</b> - A reference group of lead auditors and audit managers has been established. Feedback will be sought from the reference group on all significant developments and considerations. Further meetings with Audit Wales and Audit Scotland are scheduled for end of November/December to specifically focus on ISA 315 implications for data analytics and IT Audit.</li> <li><b>QCR</b> - ICAEW has selected their sample of cold file reviews for 2021. Once ICAEW has confirmed the scheduling of reviews across December and January, audit teams and all staff will be informed.</li> </ul>
11.	<b>Future Working Arrangements Report</b> A report on Future Working Arrangements presented by Brian O'Neill was welcomed and endorsed by SMT. The C&AG thanked the group for their extensive considerations and comprehensive work on this. The report will be issued to all staff next week.
12.	<b>Risk Management</b> <b>Corporate Risk Register</b> Colette Kane advised the Corporate Risk Register Working Group (CRRWG) had met on 3 November 2021 to consider the outcome from the Risk Workshop held on 18 October. Two matters were discussed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk Engagement</li> <li>Risk Appetite</li> </ul> <p>All changes to the register were highlighted in red for member's convenience. Discussion followed regarding the change of the rating for risk one on the register, the revised risk rating was endorsed by SMT. The need for more narrative on explaining risk appetites was acknowledged. This will be considered by CRRWG and brought back to SMT.</p>
13.	<b>Papers to Note:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes from ARAC Risk Workshop – 18 October 2021</li> <li>Notes from Advisory Board Self-Assessment Exercise – 18 October 2021</li> </ul>
14.	<b>AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Next meeting 21 December 2021 @10am.</li> </ul>