**Minutes of Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting held on 20 October 2020 @ 3pm**

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

Pamela McCreedy (COO)

Rodney Allen (Director)

Patrick Barr (Director)

Neil Gray (Director)

Colette Kane (Director)

Tomas Wilkinson (Director)

Suzanne Walsh (Director)

Louise Donnelly (Secretary)

(meeting conducted via zoom, all attended online)

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| **1.** | **Apologies**  No apologies were noted. |
| **2.** | **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**  There were no issues declared by members. |
| **3**. | **Minutes of Previous meeting and Matters Arising**  Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 September 2020 were agreed and matters arising updated. |
| **4.** | **Risk Management**  **COVID 19 Risk Register**  Colette Kane briefed members on changes made to the COVID 19 Risk Register and other risk management issues following a recent meeting of the Corporate Risk Register Working Group (CRRWG).  The following areas were discussed:  • **Project Risk Registers -** the Data Analytics and Accommodation Project Risk Registers were reviewed and the CRRWG were content that no risks needed to be escalated at this stage. This will be kept under review and incorporated as appropriate.  • **Social Media Risk –** in response to a recommendation from a recent Internal Audit review the CRRWG was asked to consider any risks concerning social media. Some proposals to reflect the issue were considered and these have now been included within the draft Corporate Risk Register (CRR). It was agreed that training for new staff and refresher training for all staff on policies surrounding social media would be appropriate. Rodney Allen to progress this.  • **Internal Audit Recommendations -** these were considered by CRRWG and where appropriate have been adopted. Both the CRR and the COVID 19 Risk Register have been updated.  • **COVID 19 Risk Register –** the CRRWG carefully considered the ongoing need for the COVID 19 Risk Register. It was proposed to continue with the COVID 19 Risk Register, given recent developments. The CRR will continue to be reviewed and updated. As the COVID 19 Risk Register remains the main focus for risk management, a substantial reworking was undertaken by the CRRWG to bring it into line with the CRR and to take on board both IA and ARAC recommendations/comments. Members were invited to consider all changes made (highlighted for convenience) and forward any feedback to Colette. |
| **5.** | **Finance Report**  Rodney Allen briefed members on the following key points:   * **2019-20**   The 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts have been certified, were laid at the NI Assembly on 23 September 2020 and have been published on the NIAO website. A briefing will be provided to the NI Assembly Audit Committee at a meeting scheduled for 21 October 2020.   * **2020-21 Budget and subsequent years** Members were asked to note the current budget position and the requirements for future years which has been submitted to the NI Assembly Audit Committee. * **Accommodation Project** The Project Board will meet again on 11 November 2020. Discussions concerning decant options are at an advanced stage. * **IT Matters** The current phase of laptop refreshes for all staff is now complete. |
| **6.** | **Corporate Report**  Rodney Allen briefed SMT on the following key points:  **HR**   * **Recruitment**   + A number of candidates have been successful in the recent Auditor competition and HR are in the process of processing offers and will confirm start dates in due course.   + The annual GTA recruitment exercise will go live on 19 October 2020 and close on 13 November 2020. Representatives from NIAO will participate in a virtual career fairs with Queen’s University on 21 October and Ulster University on 2 November. * **Attendance Management**   Members noted absence figures per employee in the rolling period 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020.   * **Annual Leave**   Members noted the position on annual leave balances at the mid-year point of end September and agreed the importance of everyone taking leave especially for health and wellbeing during the pandemic. Directors were asked to continue to monitor the position for their teams and encourage all staff to use their leave allowances.   * **Performance Management**   Members were pleased to note that the mid-year appraisal reviews were almost 100% complete.   * **Employee Engagement and Wellbeing**   The flu vaccine was rolled out to staff at onsite clinics during October and was well received with positive feedback from staff.   * **Exam Success**   Congratulations were extended to all students on the recent CAI Summer 2020 exam successes. Members noted Sinead Henry was placed fifth in the overall top 10 candidates at CAP1 which was an excellent achievement.  **Business Support**   * **Complaints** Members were briefed on the status of cases. * **Tendering Exercises**   Members were updated on the SBRI procurement and two single tender actions.   * **Governance**   The Advisory Board met on 6 October 2020 with the appointed consultant to start the development process for a new corporate plan and annual business plan. |
| **7.** | **Operational Performance Report**  A report detailing public reporting and financial audit performance was presented to update members for the first two quarters of 2020-21 (1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020).  Pamela McCreedy advised that the arrival of COVID-19 in March 2020 had a sudden and significant impact on both the content and delivery of the work programme. Members were briefed on progress to date. The C&AG requested that a report is produced for SMT to consider each month. Pamela agreed to progress this with the team.  Pamela recorded her thanks to Colette Connolly for her assistance in compiling the report. |
| **8.** | **Review of Financial Audit Methodology**  Suzanne Walsh advised that a team to progress the review will be established to coincide with staff rotations scheduled for 2021. |
| **9.** | **SBRI Update**  Two suppliers have been appointed and work on the project has commenced.  Data sharing agreements are now in place with two Departments and are being progressed with two other bodies.  The data provided by these bodies will be used to assist with the project.  Regular updates will be provided to allow SMT to monitor progress. |
| **10.** | **Technical Update**   * APC 06-20 Quality Control in NIAO issued on 13 October 2020. * An Auditor has been appointed to the technical team and will take up post on 2 November 2020. * Arrangements for the quality control reviews are currently being progressed. |
| **11.** | **Papers noted:**   * Draft ARAC Minutes of meeting held on 22 September 2020 * Draft Note of Advisory Board Workshop held on 6 October 2020 |
| **12.** | **AOB**   * **Next meeting 17 November 2020** |