

## Minutes of Senior Management Team Meeting held on Tuesday 11 April 2017

**In attendance:** K Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)  
 L Mason (AAG)  
 Janet Sides (AAG)  
 R Allen (Director)  
 N Gray (Director)  
 D Lynn (Director)  
 S McKay (Director)  
 T Wilkinson (Director)  
 C McGeown – Agenda Item 3

**Apologies:** C Kane (Director)

**Secretariat:** J Campbell (Audit Manager)  
 L Donnelly (Senior Divisional Secretary)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2017 were agreed subject to minor amendment and Matters Arising updated.</p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>The Team were updated on the current financial position of the Office with details of outturn to 31 March 2017, including an estimate of the projected surplus for 2016-17 of over £300k against out main estimate. This remains an estimate as the accruals exercise was yet to be completed. This matter was considered and the reasons for the surplus explained.</p> <p>The Annual Report and Accounts for 2016-17 exercise has commenced. As part of this process there has been ongoing liaison with CDS (printers) to provide a product incorporating enhanced infographics. This exercise has been brought forward in the schedule as the Office may be required to lay a printer’s proof version of the document in the Assembly. Therefore budget holders / managers / other staff who have been asked for returns are encouraged to return them by the dates requested.</p> <p>For 2017-18 finances, budget holders have been asked to confirm the appropriateness of their Corporate Plan forecasts or, if they now consider it necessary, to provide updated figures so that we can finalise our internal budgets lines for the year ahead.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Human Resources</b></p> <p><b>4.1. Travel and Subsistence</b></p> <p>Following the recent receipt of guidance from HMRC clarifying matters we had raised on subsistence, the Office will now proceed with issuing an updated circular to all staff.</p> <p>As part of our ongoing review of travel expenses, it was agreed that we should also seek advice from HMRC. Members noted there would be a potentially significant monetary impact on some members of staff if a change to existing practice is required.</p> <p><b>4.2. Absenteeism</b></p> <p>Further to discussions in previous months, members noted that there has been an increase in absence (April 2017 to 31 February 2017) in comparison with the same period last year, due. This is due to an increase in long term absence. In February, there was an increase in short-term absences, however this remains considerably</p>

	<p>lower than the same period last year. It was noted that almost 40% of the Office's staff recorded no sickness absence during this time.</p>
	<p><b>4.3 Appointment of GTAs</b>  The number of recruits will be decided following discussions with key staff, taking on board current Office needs, potential wastage and workforce planning figures. Going forward, an evaluation of the GTA recruitment process from marketing through to scheduling, selection and appointment will be conducted and a review of the additional value of recruiting Trainee Technicians would bring.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Governance and Risk</b></p> <p><b>5.1 Governance Statement</b>  An early draft has been produced and issued to SMT for comment and members were asked to provide feedback to J Sides.</p> <p><b>5.2 SMT Terms of Reference</b>  Draft terms of reference were considered by SMT. The importance was emphasised of clarity around the responsibility of members in support of the C&amp;AG's statutory position as a Corporation Sole. It was agreed that further feedback will be provided by members prior to formal approval of the terms of reference on an interim basis pending the appointment of a Chief Operating Officer.</p> <p><b>5.3 Business Continuity Plan</b>  Members were informed of the outcome of business continuity plan testing on 21 March 2017.</p> <p><b>5.4 Corporate Risk Register</b>  A streamlined risk register has been developed identifying four strategic risks around reputation, resourcing, influence and change management. In keeping with best practice, each of the risks have been tied into the corporate plan and a three lines of defence risk model has been adopted. Following feedback, the register was formally endorsed by SMT and will be uploaded to NIAOmi for all staff to access.</p> <p><b>5.5 Review of Whistleblowing Policy, Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan</b>  Revised Policies were presented for information. Updated versions will now be forwarded to the Audit Committee and uploaded to NIAOmi for all staff to access.</p> <p><b>5.6 Miscellaneous Governance Issues</b>  C&amp;AG informed members that Gillian Body will be leaving WAO in June 2017. However, he has agreed with the WAO C&amp;AG that Gillian may remain with NIAO in her role as an NEM for the remainder of her appointment period.</p> <p>A review of the role of the Advisory Group will be conducted following the appointment of a new COO.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Internal Audit Draft Report</b>  Draft internal reports on Staff Utilisation and Work Planning, Management of In-house audits (financial) and Staff Performance Management were considered. Each of the reviews received a "satisfactory" assessment and all recommendations have been agreed.</p> <p><b>6.2 Open Audit Points</b></p>

	<p>Members were informed that three of the four priority 2 recommendations outstanding from the March 2017 meeting have been implemented, and one remains outstanding.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>A.O.B.</b></p> <p><b>7.1 Management Information</b>  A major exercise has been initiated to set out the future information needs of management. In the first step in this process, a paper has been produced for SMT which is based upon the KPIs in our corporate plan and the data included in our annual report. It includes both compliance and outcomes based measures. This will be followed up with a closer examination of how the information can be obtained and presented to meet user needs e.g. more detail to AMs and Directors, less detail to SMT. An AM will take this forward.</p> <p><b>7.2 Accommodation Review</b>  The SIB report on Office accommodation needs has been received. Members had received a separate presentation on the matter and were agreed on the importance of now exploring all options for the future accommodation needs of NIAO.</p> <p><b>7.3 Huggett Review</b>  The new structure for Huggett folders is waiting to be reviewed and populated. It was agreed that a staff member with a financial audit background will be identified to move this exercise forward.</p> <p><b>7.4 Stakeholder Engagement</b>  Members were informed that the annual auditee survey was issued on 31 March 2017 to 50 participants. The surveys are to completed by the Accounting Officer, or Chief Financial Officer taking account of the views of others where appropriate e.g. the Chair of the Audit Committee. The deadline set for responding is 14 April 2017.</p> <p><b>7.5 NICS Fast Stream Secondment</b>  The Office will follow up the potential of a further inward secondment with NICS.</p> <p><b>7.6 Next Meeting</b>  Tuesday 9 May 2017 @ 10am.</p>