

Minutes of Senior Management Team Meeting held on Monday 20th March 2017

In attendance: K Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)
L Mason (AAG)
Janet Sides (AAG)
R Allen (Director)
N Gray (Director)
C Kane (Director)
D Lynn (Director)
S McKay (Director)
T Wilkinson (Director)
C Whinnery (HR) - Agenda item 4

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

0.	<p>The passing of our colleague Geoff Wright</p> <p>The meeting opened with SMT marking the death of our colleague, Geoff Wright. It was noted that there had been a huge turnout for his funeral. Members discussed the tremendous response to the book of condolence the Office had opened and how the book should be given to the family. They also discussed holding an event to remember Geoff and the opinions of staff were acknowledged as critical to that decision.</p>
1.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p>
2.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 February 2017 were agreed subject to minor amendment and Matters Arising updated.</p>
3.	<p>Finance</p> <p>The Team was updated on the current financial position of the Office, the projected surplus for 2016-17, and updates on the 2016-17 Annual Report and the charge-out rates exercises for 2017-18. While no NI Executive budget for 2017-18 is in place, Janet Sides informed the meeting that the Office would be planning on the basis of a budget reduction of 4 per cent. 2017-18 allocations to budget holders would be finalised shortly.</p>
4.	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>Final Year GTAs</p> <p>It was noted that final year GTAs contracts will end on 31st August 2017. It was also noted there was an identified need for additional staff at Auditor grade. A number of options were discussed and a way forward agreed. C Whinnery to meet with GTAs to discuss this issue.</p> <p>Travel and Subsistence</p> <p>Members were informed that a HMRC investigation of NIAO subsistence had taken place in 2016 and an element of non-compliance was noted. As a result of this review, NIAO immediately implemented corrective procedures, and is in the process of reviewing and revising its travel and subsistence policies. This includes the clarification of certain matters with HMRC. It is anticipated the Office will continue to align its policy in this area with the NICS.</p> <p>Absenteeism</p> <p>Within the current year, it was noted that there was a significant increase in absence (April 2017 to 31 January 2017) in comparison with the same period last year, with a</p>

	<p>headline figure averaging at 12 days per person. This was due to an increase in long term absence. It was further noted that there had been a significant reversal of long term absence over the last few months. Members were pleased to note that there had been a reduction of over 20 per cent in short term absence over past year and that almost half of the Office's staff recorded no sickness absence in the period.</p> <p>The meeting was informed that the Office is in the process of reviewing its absenteeism policy. TUS will also be consulted in this process.</p>
5.	<p>Governance and Risk</p> <p>Update on Advisory Group and Audit Committee Meetings A brief of the recent Advisory Group and Audit Committee meetings was provided to the team.</p> <p>Issues for Inclusion in Governance Statement J Sides informed the meeting that the Office will be undertaking its annual exercise in developing the governance statement for the 2016-17 accounts. A draft of this will be presented at the next SMT meeting.</p> <p>Development of Corporate Risk Register Members were informed that the Office is in the process of developing a single, streamlined risk register. This will be presented at the next SMT meeting.</p>
6.	<p>A.O.B.</p> <p>30 Year Anniversary The C&AG is keen to mark the 30th Anniversary and therefore wants to open discussions on this matter; he has already been in contact with Involve to Evolve (I2E) and the Stakeholder Engagement Group. The Team considered this event to be an excellent opportunity to raise the Office's profile with our external stakeholders.</p> <p>To date proposals range from planting a tree on the Stormont Estate to holding a conference later in the year with a theme such as, "How Audit has changed" or "The Audit Office - The Next 30 Years". Further proposals are welcome from all staff and all will be considered by SMT.</p> <p>Terms Of Reference for SMT - It was agreed the ToRs which existed for the Executive Team should be revised for the newly constituted SMT. The revised version will be discussed at the next SMT meeting. This should be considered as an interim measure prior to the appointment of a Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Next Meeting The next meeting of SMT will be held at 10:00AM on Tuesday 11 April 2017 in NIAO Conference Room.</p>