

## Minutes of Senior Management Team Meeting held on Tuesday 6 June 2017

**In attendance:** K Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)  
L Mason (AAG)  
J Sides (AAG)  
R Allen (Director)  
C Kane (Director)  
D Lynn (Director)  
S McKay (Director)

**Apologies:** N Gray (Director)  
T Wilkinson (Director)

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

	C&AG opened proceedings by informing the meeting of the death of Dr Bill Jack CB, who was C&AG from 1989-1994. It was agreed to notify all staff of a Service of Thanksgiving which will be held in Fisherwick Presbyterian Church at 1:00pm on Saturday 10 June.
<b>1.</b> <b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b> <b>Matters Arising</b> Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 May 2017 were agreed and Matters Arising updated.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Finance</b> <b>3.1 Finance Report</b> SMT was informed that, while no formal budget is in place for 2017-18, the Office is planning on the basis of the budget agreed with the Assembly Audit Committee (which is a budget reduction of 4 per cent). Working on this basis, 2017-18 internal budgets have been finalised and communicated to all budget holders. Funding is available for allocation to in-year projects, including the implementation of the Digital Services Strategy. <b>3.2 Draft Annual Report and Accounts</b> The C&AG wished to place on record his thanks to the team for the efficient delivery of the annual report and accounts. The 2016-17 audit has been largely completed with no issues arising and SMT was informed that the Office intends to lay the accounts on 27 June 2017. <b>3.3 Impacts</b> The meeting was informed that during 2016-17, quantified financial impacts of £26.0 million were achieved as a result of work of the Office and PAC (2015-16; £14.3 million). This figure has been independently validated by the Office's external auditor. In reviewing the process the C&AG considered the introduction of the interim impact assessment exercise to be invaluable as it teased out many of the issues well in advance of audit and publication deadlines. <b>3.4 Annual Returns</b> <b>Monitoring Report/Transparency Report</b> SMT was informed of the outcomes of the work undertaken in 2016-17 to monitor compliance with quality control policies and procedures. This included no reported instances of non-compliance with professional ethical requirements, and positive assurances from the review of financial audit opinions and value for money reports.

	<p>The findings of the report were noted by the Team.</p> <p><b>HR Report</b> SMT considered the HR Report which set out the challenges and achievements in HR during 2016-17, including the design and implementation of a new Performance Management System and the management of the Voluntary Exit Scheme.</p> <p>The Report detailed absenteeism statistics for the year highlighting the levels of long term absence. SMT welcomed the recent reductions in this and the year on year reduction in short term sick absence. It was agreed that absenteeism should continue to be monitored regularly and the meeting acknowledged the importance of consistent application of office policy, which is currently under review.</p> <p>It was also agreed that HR will continue to monitor workplace stress on an ongoing basis alongside promotion of our health and well being practices. Training will be provided to line managers on mental health and well being awareness and stress identification and mental health wellbeing training will be available for all staff later in the year.</p> <p><b>Disability Action Plan</b> SMT considered the disability action plan which set out how the Office proposes to fulfil its duties in relation to its disability legislation. The proposal to seek a placement(s) for a registered disabled person in the Office was endorsed by the Team.</p> <p><b>3.5 Procurement Plan</b> The Procurement Plan, which set out the NIAO's essential priorities for procurement in 2017-18 and the agreed programme of planned procurement activity was considered and approved by SMT.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Governance and Risk</b></p> <p><b>4.1 Corporate Risk Register</b> The meeting was informed that a major review of the risk register had led to the identification of four key risks around reputation, resourcing, influence and change management. SMT discussed current risks and agreed there would be merit in meeting separately for an in-depth consideration of our risk environment.</p> <p>SMT noted that a Corporate Risk Working Group had been established, led by Colette Kane, which will oversee the administration the risk management process and monitor risk across the Office.</p> <p><b>4.2 Risk Management Strategy</b> The risk management strategy was reviewed noting it had been updated to take on board the new approach to the risk register and how it will be overseen. This was endorsed by SMT and will be made available to all staff.</p> <p><b>4.3 Assurances for Audit Committee Health and Safety (H&amp;S)</b> In considering the annual H&amp;S Report, the Team noted that there was no H&amp;S Officer in place, following two requests to staff for expressions of interest. It was important to have a H&amp;S Officer in post even though there were no recorded incidents in 2016-17.</p> <p><b>Senior Management/NEM Expenses</b> A paper detailing expenses incurred was noted.</p> <p><b>4.4 Business Continuity Plan</b></p>

	<p>The Business Continuity Plan, which had been updated following an exercise conducted on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017, was reviewed and endorsed by the Team.</p>
5.	<p><b>Accommodation Review</b></p> <p><b>5.1 Terms of Reference</b>  SMT endorsed the Terms of Reference of the Accommodation Review Team. A target of 31 October 2017 was set to identify a range of potential options to address NIAO's accommodation needs, assess these options in terms of suitability for NIAO, consider potential short term measures to maximise the use of existing accommodation. All findings will be reported to SMT with recommendations on the way forward.</p> <p>The terms of reference will be made available for all staff on NIAOmi.</p>
6.	<p><b>A.O.B.</b></p> <p><b>6.1 Auditee Survey</b>  The meeting was informed that from 50 surveys issued, the Office received 29 responses (58 per cent), which were largely positive. It was noted that there were some points that would require further consideration including how we make a more positive impact in our VFM work where feedback was less favourable.</p> <p>Following on from the review, SMT agreed that, in keeping with the commitment to the auditees, the audit teams will arrange for engagement auditors to follow up on any specific matters. The results of feedback and any lessons learned will be communicated to staff across the Office.</p> <p><b>6.2 Media Strategy for Summer Publications</b>  The Media Schedule was presented for information.</p> <p><b>6.3 Next Meeting</b>  To be confirmed.</p>