

## Minutes of Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting held on 14 September 2021 @ 10am

**In attendance:** Kieran Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)  
 Rodney Allen (COO)  
 Neil Gray (Director)  
 Colette Kane (Director)  
 Brian O’Neill (Director)  
 Tomas Wilkinson (Director)  
 Ian McCartney (RSM) – Agenda item 4) via Zoom  
 Louise Donnelly (Secretary)

**Apologies:** Suzanne Walsh (Director)  
 Patrick Barr (Director)

No.	Topic
1.	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies were accepted as noted above.
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 17 August 2021 were agreed and the matters arising noted as updated.
4.	<b>Internal Audit Strategy</b> <p>Ian McCartney joined the meeting via Zoom and provided an overview on key areas of the Strategy. Members were advised that RSM had engaged with key staff prior to the production of the internal audit plan for 2021/22 to ensure a flexible programme of work mindful of the ever changing developments and challenges surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. Discussion followed on the areas of remote working and recruitment, both included in the Strategy. Next steps are to agree dates and a timeline for the delivery of the plan.</p> <p>The revised Strategy, including timelines will be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) at their meeting scheduled for 21 September 2021.</p>
5.	<b>Contract Management</b> <p>Tomas Wilkinson provided an update on upcoming key dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitation to tender going live 15 September 2021</li> <li>• Responses due 19 October 2021</li> <li>• Contract to be awarded mid-December 2021</li> </ul> <p>Members were advised that consideration will have to be given to legal advice obtained relating to the breach of contract.</p>
6.	<b>Climate Change – Net Zero - internal Report</b> <p>Brian O’Neill briefed members on the content of the report, providing information on the Office’s current position, what other audit agencies are undertaking and what the Office can change going forward.</p>

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	<p>SMT agreed there is a need for an internal, proportional step change in this area and recognised the need for the development of a sustainability policy. Members were advised information is currently being collated using 2018-19 as a baseline as the establishment of targets and performance information for the current year is affected by the NIAO decant to Bradford Court, it was agreed that any information generated in current temporary office accommodation with a smaller footprint would be misleading.</p> <p>A list of short term objectives were agreed and an update will be provided to SMT early in 2022 when more information is available.</p>
7.	<p><b>Cyber Security – Update Paper</b></p> <p>SMT reviewed and discussed the paper and its assessments and the assurance provided by the Cyber Security exercise. Overall, the review has confirmed a high level of compliance and an action plan has been put in place to improve and strengthen areas where weaknesses have been identified. The action plan was endorsed by SMT.</p>
8.	<p><b>BTP – Update</b></p> <p>Rodney Allen provided a verbal update to members, he advised that a stocktake of the Programme is currently ongoing and that a report will be provided to update members at the October meeting. Going forward the C&amp;AG requested a specific area of the Programme be covered at SMT each month.</p>
9.	<p><b>Management Information Report</b></p> <p>A link to the interactive performance report detailing key performance outturns for the public reporting and financial audit programmes to September 2021 was presented. Rodney Allen agreed to discuss the backlog position with the Directorate at the next Operational Management Team meeting. The C&amp;AG suggested a tool in the report would be beneficial to look forward and provide a list of planned public reports. Rodney will liaise with Suzanne Walsh to discuss possible development of this tool.</p>
10.	<p><b>Corporate Report</b></p> <p>Brian O’Neill provided an overview on the current position with regard to Finance, HR and Business Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Finance</b> 2020-21 - Members were asked to note the current budgetary position in relation to the October monitoring round.</li> <li>• <b>Refurbishment of 106 University Street</b> – The target date for completion is 18 July 2022 and the project is on schedule.</li> <li>• <b>Business Support</b> Members were updated were on the Branding Exercise, information Management, Governance, Communications and Assembly Support.</li> <li>• <b>HR</b> <b>Recruitment</b> - The Auditor recruitment exercise is currently underway. It will close on 26 September 2021 and interviews have been scheduled for the beginning of October 2021. <b>Attendance Management</b> - Members noted absence figures per employee in the rolling period 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021. <b>Annual Leave uptake</b> Members noted the position on annual leave balances at 31 August 2021 and agreed staff should be encouraged to take leave in the interests of their health and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
11.	<p><b>Technical Report</b></p>

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	<p>The report was considered by members and the recommendations on review of quality control arrangements were accepted.</p>
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Risk Management</b>  <b>Corporate Risk Register</b></p> <p>Colette Kane informed SMT that the Corporate Risk Register Working Group (CRRWG) had met on 6 September 2021 and had welcomed four new members. Members were advised the Risk Register had been updated to reflect discussions held at the CRRWG meeting and that all changes were highlighted in red for members' convenience. Discussion followed surrounding the risks concerning cyber security.</p> <p>A workshop on risk for members of ARAC and SMT has been scheduled for 18th October 2021.</p> <p>The revised register will be presented to ARAC at their meeting scheduled for 21 September 2021.</p>
<p><b>13.</b></p>	<p><b>Papers to Note:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Audit Final Report to those charged with governance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next meeting 19 October 2021 @10am.</li> </ul>