

Minutes of Senior Management Team Meeting held on 20 August 2019

In attendance: K Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)
P McCreedy (COO)
R Allen (Director)
N Gray (Director)
C Kane (Director)
D Lynn (Director)
T Wilkinson (Director)
L Donnelly (Secretary)

<p>1. & 2.</p>	<p>Minutes of Previous meeting and Matters Arising Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 June 2019 were agreed and matters arising updated.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Risk Management Corporate Risk Register C Kane advised members that the Corporate Risk Register will be updated in preparation for the Audit and Risk Committee (ARAC) meeting scheduled for 24 September 2019. The Corporate Risk Management Working Group (CRMWG) will meet before ARAC. Members of SMT were asked to indicate areas for consideration. The following were suggested areas for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any further known impacts from Brexit; • Staffing / Resourcing changes; • Lessons from the summer recess audits/ recent publications; • The consequences of long term suspension of the political institutions on the Office's experience and expertise in supporting Assembly/Parliamentary Committees and the benefits of refresher training and other actions in this area • Review of major projects e.g. accommodation and GovTech <p>These were briefly discussed.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Finance Report 2018-19 Members noted the year end position for 2018-19.</p> <p>2019-20 and Forward The C&AG stated he had received a response from the Secretary of State to his letter of 11 June 2019 outlining his concerns about the budget. He asked that the response be copied to all SMT members.</p> <p>R Allen advised members that DoF have acknowledged NIAO did not receive any increased baseline in 2019-20 and noted our concerns in relation to baseline funding in the year 2020-21.</p> <p>Premises/facilities Current tenants from the Neurology Enquiry Team have requested an extension to their lease until the end of March 2020. SMT approved this request.</p>

	<p>Accommodation Project</p> <p>Members were advised that invitations to tender to procure the accommodation design team have been issued to the shortlisted candidates, it is anticipated the design team will be appointed by November 2019. Meetings have been scheduled for the user groups and some staff availed of the opportunity to visit the NICS pilot accommodation project at Goodwood House.</p>
5.	<p>Corporate</p>
5.1	<p>Corporate Report</p> <p>Members considered the HR and Business Support updates, specifically noting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two auditors have been appointed and will take up post in September. – The apprenticeship recruitment scheme is progressing and one apprentice will take up post in September. – Interviews for the HR Manager post will conclude on 23 August 2019. – Three new graduate trainee accountants will commence their employment in September. • Training Team Effectiveness training has been scheduled for all staff and leadership training has been scheduled for September for Audit Managers and Directors. • Performance Management Invitations to complete six month check-ins have been send to all staff for completion by 30 August 2019. • Employee Engagement and Wellbeing A report on the recent workshops held following the staff survey results will be presented at the next SMT meeting on 17 September 2019.
5.2	<p>Public Reporting and Financial Audit Performance</p> <p>A report providing a summary of key performance outturns to 30 June 2019 was presented, this also included reports published to date. Going forward it will be streamlined to report against indicators in our Strategic Corporate Framework and run alongside our work on Time & Space. Members noted the RAG status on the public reporting table and agreed the report should be considered in more detail by OMT.</p>
6.	<p>External Quality Assurance</p> <p>Members discussed extending the current quality control arrangements to include an independent external review which would be consistent with other audit agencies who have similar arrangements in place. Various options and timelines were discussed including the possibility of commissioning an ISQC1 review by Internal Audit as an initial step. It was agreed in principle to extend the quality assurance arrangements however further analysis was requested and SMT agreed to discuss this further.</p>

7.	<p>OMT/SMT Terms of Reference (TOR) Terms of reference for the Operational Management Team (OMT) and the Senior Management Team (SMT) were presented for review. Members approved the TORs subject to minor amendments.</p>
8.	<p>Communications Strategy A draft Communications and Engagement Strategy including an action plan proposing a number of initial tasks and actions was presented to SMT. Members welcomed the draft Strategy and after discussion agreed to implement the action plan. Members recognised that the actions and targets will be further defined, developed and reviewed as the Strategy evolves. This will continue to be reviewed by SMT.</p>
9.	<p>Data Analytics T Wilkinson briefed members on progress to date. Phase 1 of the GovTech project has been completed. A meeting with the Cabinet Office is scheduled for September for further assessment before a decision is made to proceed with Phase 2. Phase 2 will start in December for 12 months if we decide to go ahead.</p>
7.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of next meeting – 17 September 2019 The Business Transformation Programme will be on the agenda for the next meeting. • Publication of Reports on accounts and accounts qualifications on NIAO website The C&AG referred to the publication of reports on 9 August 2019 concerning accounts qualifications in the pre-summer recess period. He considered this new initiative to be timely and as a result he no longer anticipates publishing a general report.