**Minutes of Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting held on 24 April 2020 @ 10am**

**In line with official Government advice all Northern Ireland Audit Office staff are currently working from home until further notice. This meeting was conducted remotely online.**

**In attendance:** Kieran Donnelly, Chair (C&AG)

Pamela McCreedy (COO)

Rodney Allen (Director)

Patrick Barr (Director)

Colette Kane (Director)

Tomas Wilkinson (Director)

Suzanne Walsh (Director)

Louise Donnelly (Secretary)

**Apologies:** Neil Gray (Director)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** | **Apologies**  An apology from Neil Gray was noted. |
| **2.** | **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**  There were no issues declared by members. |
| **3**. | **Minutes of Previous meeting and Matters Arising**  Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 April 2020 were agreed and matters arising updated. |
| **4.** | **Business Transformation Programme (BTP)**  Pamela McCreedy updated members on the current position of the BTP. Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) for work streams have been subject to monitoring throughout the period. Pamela recorded her thanks to Christine Burns for co-ordinating the returns. The following points were discussed:   * **Communication and Engagement**    + **Communication and Engagement Strategy** – The strategy was approved by SMT in January 2020 and the implementation of actions is ongoing. A stocktake of progress is to be undertaken and SMT will be updated at the next meeting. The team is maintaining regular engagement with other audit agencies Comms Teams in light of the current COVID 19 pandemic. * **Digitalisation** * **Data Analytics –** NIAO will progress to Phase 2 of the GovTech challenge with a VFM only approach, however due to ongoing COVID 19 pandemic the project is currently on hold until further notice.  The Data Analytics team are exploring the possibility of progressing financial audit opportunities in collaboration with other public audit agencies. The team have also progressed a number of apps and online training tools assist staff with auditing practices. * **Management Information -** work on Time and Space is progressing and will be completed over the coming months. * **People**   + **HR Strategy** – A draft strategy will be available for SMT to consider at the June 2020 meeting.   + **Recognition Package** – It is anticipated a two year pay plan will be agreed by TUS and implementation will follow.   + **Staff Survey –** The Action Plan will be shared with TUS and communicated to staff in May 2020. * **Governance and Audit Practices** * **Financial Audit Methodology -** A review of audit methodologies used by other audit agencies will be carried out over the next 6-12 months to determine appropriateness to NIAO audits. * **Working Environment**   + **Accommodation project** – An update will be provided at agenda item 6.   The Advisory Board will be updated on BTP at their meeting scheduled for 26 May 2020. |
| **5.** | **Risk Management**  **Sub Risk Register for COVID 19**  Colette Kane advised the Sub Risk Register had been updated to reflect comments made at the meeting held on 6 April 2020, all changes made were highlighted in red for members’ convenience. Members agreed that all risks and associated actions will require continued liaison with stakeholders, regular review by both OMT and SMT and continued interaction and communication with staff.  The Sub Risk Register will be considered by ARAC at their meeting scheduled for 5 May 2020. |
| **6.** | **Finance Report**  **2019-20**  Rodney Allen briefed members on the following key points:   * **Finance**   The 2019-20 budgetary position and the estimated year-end position was discussed. Members were asked to note the 2020-21 budget position.   * **Accommodation Project**   Members were provided with a detailed analysis of the current Accommodation Project position following RIBA stage 2 completion, including the estimated costs of the project. Members discussed various aspects, including the future workplace requirements in light of existing circumstances and the funding that would need to be secured. Members were asked to provide any further feedback or comments to Rodney Allen before the Project Board meeting scheduled for 29 April 2020, which would decide whether to progress to stage 3 of the project.   * **Annual Report and Accounts**   Work is progressing on the production of the Annual Report and Accounts in line with the original agreed timescales, although some slippage is anticipated in light of current circumstances. This will continue to be monitored. |
| **7.** | **Corporate Report**  Rodney Allen briefed SMT members on the following key points:  **HR**   * **Recruitment**   + A new GTA and a new auditor will take up post in the next week and another GTA will take up post in September 2020   + The temporary promotion for the Senior Auditor post is progressing and an appointment is expected before the end of April.   + **Attendance Management**   Members noted absence figures per employee in the rolling period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, the breakdown between short term and long term and the numbers of staff with no absences.   * **Performance Management**   Members were asked to note and action any outstanding end of year reviews and planning meetings.  **Business Support**   * **Tendering Exercises**   Members were updated on the current external quality assurance, legal services and temporary staff tendering exercises.   * **Governance**   The next meeting of the Advisory Board will be 26 May 2020. The next meeting of ARAC will be 5 May 2020. Engagement took place with the Remuneration Committee in recent weeks before the issue of the Recognition Package to TUS.   * **Assembly Support**   While the PAC suspended its meetings from 19 March 2019, we continue to liaise with the Committee Clerk in relation to the forward work programme and timetable. |
| **8.** | **Internal Audit Reports**  Members noted the three final reports that have been received and assessments of “satisfactory” provided. These reports will be considered at the ARAC meeting scheduled for 5 May 2020. |
| **9.** | **Operational Performance Report – end of year**  Rodney Allen presented a report summarising the key performance outturns for the period ended 31 March 2020 for the public reporting programme and the financial audit programme. Members discussed the progression of backlog accounts and the C&AG asked Directors to follow-up progress with the relevant Departments. |
| **10.** | **SMT**  **Review of Terms of Reference (TOR)**  Members reviewed the TOR, no changes were recorded.  **SMT Self-Assessment**  A draft self-assessment questionnaire was agreed by SMT. All members are to complete the assessment before the next meeting when a report on the findings will be presented. |
| **11.** | **Data Analytics and GOVTECH Update**  Suzanne Walsh provided an update at agenda item 4 BTP. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **12.** | **AOB**  **FRC Conflicts Guidance**  Suzanne Walsh provided an update on the FRC’s 2019 Ethical Standard and advised SMT that none of the public bodies audited by NIAO met the definition of an OEPI.  This will communicated to all contractors providing audit services to NIAO.  **QCR**  Suzanne Walsh advised SMT that the QCR process was nearing conclusion.  After a moderation process has been completed results will be published in a circular to all staff.  **Next meeting 19 May 2020** |