**Minutes of Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting held on 15 September 2020 @ 10am**

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

Pamela McCreedy (COO)

Rodney Allen (Director)

Patrick Barr (Director)

Neil Gray (Director)

Colette Kane (Director)

Tomas Wilkinson (Director)

Suzanne Walsh (Director)

Louise Donnelly (Secretary)\*

(\*attended remotely online)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** | **Apologies**  No apologies were 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 21 July 2020 were agreed and matters arising updated. |
| **4.** | **Risk Management**  **COVID 19 Risk Register**  Colette Kane briefed members on changes made to the COVID 19 risk register following the July meeting of SMT, changes were highlighted for member’s convenience.    **Status of the Corporate Risk Register**  The Corporate Risk Register is regularly reviewed by the Operational Management Team (OMT) and the Corporate Risk Register Working Group (CRRWG). The possibility of merging the COVID 19 risk register and the Corporate Risk Register will be reassessed by the CRRWG at their next meeting but this will be dependent upon the transmission of the COVID 19 virus over the coming months. SMT are content the risks identified on the Corporate Risk Register are currently being managed. |
| **5.** | **Finance Report**  Rodney Allen briefed members on the following key points:   * **2019-20**   The draft 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts will be presented to the C&AG for sign off now that the IT assurances have been received. The final report will be laid at the NI Assembly and published on the NIAO website in the coming days.   * **2020-21 Budget and subsequent years** Members were asked to note the current budget position and were advised that due to the ongoing pandemic some budget lines may not be fully utilised, these will continue to be monitored. Members agreed the October monitoring return. Members also discussed and agreed the resource requirements for the budget planning years through to 2023-24 which would be prepared for submission to the NI Assembly Audit Committee for consideration at its next meeting. * **Internal control matters** Members were briefed on two internal control issues relating to finances and IT and assured of the steps taken to improve controls. * **Accommodation Project** The Project Board will meet again on the 16 September. Stage four of the design project has commenced. A working group will be established to oversee and manage the decantstage of the project. * **IT Matters** The current phase of laptop refreshes for staff will be completed in the coming weeks. Members also noted the anticipated roll out of Office 365 by IT Assist. |
| **6.** | **Corporate Report**  Rodney Allen briefed SMT on the following key points:  **HR**   * **Attendance Management**   Members noted absence figures per employee in the rolling period 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020.   * **Performance Management**   Members were asked to note the timeline for completion of mid-year reviews and complete any that are outstanding.  **Business Support**   * **Complaints** Members were briefed on the status of cases. * **Tendering Exercises**   Members were updated on the current legal services and SBRI tendering exercises.   * **Governance**   Members were advised that the Audit and Risk Assessment Committee (ARAC) will meet on 22 September 2020.   * **Quarterly Performance Report**   In light of the covid 19 challenges it was agreed a six monthly report would be prepared for consideration at the October SMT meeting.   * **Corporate Plan**   SMT approved the proposed work programme for the production of the new corporate plan. A workshop session for Advisory Board members is scheduled for October 2020. |
| **7.** | **BTP Update**  **Business Transformation Programme (BTP)**  Pamela McCreedy updated members on the current position of the BTP. Project Initiation Documents 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** – Strategy now in place and viewed as complete in terms of the BTP. * **Digitalisation** * **Data Analytics –** Funding for the GovTech challenge has been withdrawn. Further information is provided at agenda item 11. * **People**   + **HR Strategy** – Complete, now referred to as the People Strategy and has been approved by SMT.   + **Recognition Package** – Complete, a two year pay agreement has been agreed.   + **Staff Survey –** Complete, the Action Plan was communicated to staff in May 2020. A new survey will be undertaken later in the year. * **Governance and Audit Practices** * **Financial Audit Methodology** - An update will be provided at agenda item 10. * **Working Environment**   + **Accommodation project** – An update was provided at agenda item 5. |
| **8.** | **Internal Audit Reports**  Tranche 1 of the Internal Audit Programme for 2020-21 commenced on Monday 20 July, with audits being conducted on Accommodation and Strategic Planning and Risk Management. Both audits delivered satisfactory assurances with minor recommendations made on the Strategic Planning and Risk Management report.  SMT noted the contents. The reports will go forward to the next ARAC meeting scheduled for 22 September 2020. |
| **9.** | **Remaining Annual Assurances**   * **IT Assurance Statement** SMT is satisfied that the Office had adequate arrangements and controls in place in 2019-20 to oversee and manage IT services. Members endorsed the statement for presentation to ARAC. * **SMT and Non-Executive Director (NED) Expenses** Members endorsed the information presented and approved the onward progression to ARAC and subsequent publication on the NIAO website. |
| **10.** | **Review of Financial Audit Methodology**  A review of audit methodologies used by other audit agencies will be progressed over the next 6-12 months to determine appropriateness to NIAO audits. A six stage plan to progress the review was presented to SMT for consideration and approval. SMT approved the plan, and agreed a team would be established to progress the review. |
| **11.** | **SBRI and GovTech Update**  Suzanne Walsh provided an update on progress to date.  Due to the pandemic, funding for the GovTech challenge has been withdrawn.  **SBRI –** Phase two is underway with bids to be received by Friday 18 September 2020, the panel will meet early next week to assess bids received and appoint two suppliers. |
| **12.** | **People Strategy**  Following engagement with staff and Trade Union Side and consultation with Marie Mallon (Non-executive Board member) a final draft of the People Strategy was presented to SMT for approval.  After discussion SMT endorsed the Strategy. |
| **13.** | **ARAC Agenda**  Noted. |
| **14.** | **AOB**   * **Next meeting 20 October 2020** |