**Minutes of Senior Management Team (SMT) Meeting held on 17 November 2020 @ 10am**

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

Pamela McCreedy (COO)

Patrick Barr (Director)

Neil Gray (Director)

Colette Kane (Director)

Tomas Wilkinson (Director)

Suzanne Walsh (Director)

Louise Donnelly (Secretary)

Joe Campbell (Audit Manager) – Agenda item 6

Orla Kee (HR Manager) – Agenda item 6

**Apologies:** Rodney Allen (Director)

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| **1.** | **Apologies**  Apologies from Rodney Allen 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 20 October 2020 were agreed subject to minor amendment and the matters arising updated. |
| **4.** | **Risk Management**  **COVID 19 Risk Register**  Colette Kane advised members there were no changes to the COVID 19 Risk Register since the last SMT meeting held on 20 October 2020. The register will be presented to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) at their meeting scheduled for January 2021.  Members recorded their thanks to Colette and members of the Corporate Risk Register Working Group (CRRWG) for all the work involved in the preparation of the register. |
| **5.** | **Finance Report**  Pamela McCreedy briefed members on the following key points:   * **2020-21 Budget and subsequent years** Members were asked to note the current budget position. * **Accommodation Project**   The Project Board met on 11 November with the next meeting scheduled for 16December 2020. Discussions around the preferred decant option are at an advanced stage and a decant working group has been created to oversee and manage the move. It is expected that the decant will be complete by the end of April 2021. |
| **6.** | **Corporate Report**  Orla Kee and Joe Campbell joined the meeting.  Orla briefed members on the following points:  **HR**   * **Recruitment**   + Auditor posts have been successfully filled.   + The annual GTA recruitment exercise closed on 13 November 2020, as a result of the high profile recruitment campaign there has been an excellent response. Testing is scheduled for late November 2020 and interviews mid December 2020. * **Attendance Management**   Members noted absence figures per employee in the rolling period 1 November 2019 to 31 October 2020. Orla provided an update on the position regarding staff annual leave balances.   * **Training** Staff are currently completing mandatory Cyber Security Awareness and Anti-Fraud Awareness eLearning modules. * **Performance Management**   Invitations to complete the end of year reviews will be issued in the coming weeks.   * **Employee Relations**   Orla highlighted to members the recent positive tweet by NIPSA concerning the good working relations between themselves and NIAO.   * **Employee Engagement and Wellbeing**   The flu vaccine was well received with positive feedback from staff. Engagement with suppliers to identify wellbeing initiatives for staff are also being considered.   * **Miscellaneous**   Regular meetings between HR teams from all the audit institutions have resulted in increased shared learning as well as a forward work programme to discuss other key areas.  Joe briefed members on the following points:  **Business Support**   * **Complaints** Members were briefed on the status of cases. * **Tendering Exercises**   Members were updated on two procurement exercises.   * **Accessibility Review** – Recommendations received following the website review have been agreed and an update on implementation will be provided at the next SMT in December. * **Governance**   The Advisory Board will meet again on 3 December 2020.   * **Communications** The team has been working closely with audit teams in preparation for the publication of a series of reports during November and December. It also assisted in the virtual recruitment fairs at QUB and UUJ and has been active in promoting this exercise through social media. |
| **7.** | **Operational Performance Report**  At the October 2020 meeting of SMT the C&AG requested the operational performance report (previously provided quarterly to SMT) be produced on a monthly basis. A report detailing key performance outturns for the public reporting and financial audit programmes from 1 April 2020 to 31 October 2020 was presented. The C&AG welcomed the report and areas requiring streamlining and development were discussed. |

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| **8.** | **Business Transformation Programme (BTP) Position Paper**  Pamela McCreedy provided a paper detailing completed work streams to date and a series of recommended actions on outstanding tasks.  SMT formally endorsed the paper agreeingthe work streams identified as complete. Members agreed to review outstanding tasks and set target dates for completion. This will be reviewed at the December SMT meeting; it was agreed that tasks identified not for progression will be recorded and the work stream designated as complete by SMT, with no further monitoring required.  An infographic prepared for Advisory Board was shared with members for information. |
| **9.** | **COVID 19 Fraud Risks – Internal Evaluation**  Following the publication of our guide “Covid-19 Fraud Risks” on 1 September 2020, an internal evaluation of NIAO operations was carried out. A report on the findings was presented to SMT for information. Members welcomed the document and agreed to follow up any queries on content with Rodney Allen. |
| **10.** | **Technical Update**   * APC 10-20 -Arrangements for 2020 Quality Assurance Cold Reviewsissued on 13 October 2020. * Independent external reviews by ICAEW are currently ongoing. * Cold Reviews should be completed by January 2021. |
| **11.** | **Remuneration Committee (RemCom) Terms of Reference Review (ToRs)**  A review of the ToRs was undertaken in consultation with the Chair of the Committee. SMT agreed the changes and the revised ToRs will be presented to the Advisory Board for approval at their meeting scheduled for 3 December 2020. |
| **11.** | **Papers noted:**   * Draft Advisory Board Agenda for meeting scheduled for 3 December 2020. |
| **12.** | **AOB**   * **Next meeting 15 December 2020** |