

REPORT OF THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Introduction

1. The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) is required to prepare an Annual Report and Accounts in accordance with the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and the Department of Education (DE) directions issued thereunder.
2. As required by DE's accounts direction, GTCNI submitted its draft 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on 7 May 2021. However, it was incomplete, with GTCNI advising that this was due to delays in receipt of pension and remuneration figures.
3. GTCNI provided an updated Annual Report and Accounts on 30 May 2021. However, some pension and remuneration figures remained outstanding.
4. A complete Annual Report and Accounts was provided by GTCNI on 16 May 2022, over 13 months after the financial year end and 12 months after the required submission date.
5. Finalisation of the 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts and its subsequent audit have been delayed due to a number of reasons:
 - GTCNI's Finance & Contracts Manager resigned with effect from 18 June 2021. GTCNI explored a number of avenues to recruit a replacement including secondment and the use of a central government framework agreement. However, these were unsuccessful. Similarly, GTCNI's initial attempts to recruit directly via recruitment agencies were unsuccessful. Consequently, GTCNI was unable to finalise its Annual Report and Accounts or facilitate an audit until a Head of Corporate Services was appointed from a recruitment agency on 21 March 2022. This officer subsequently left GTCNI employment on 26 August 2022 and a replacement took up post on 12 September 2022.
 - On 13 December 2021, the Education Minister announced that following an independent Effectiveness Review which revealed systemic failures and a breakdown of working relationships within the Council, she had decided to stand down the GTCNI Council and its Committees with immediate effect. The implications of this decision for governance arrangements, including approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, needed to be established. The arrangements were not finalised until the end of June 2022.
 - The Chief Executive left GTCNI on 31 May 2022. Whilst an updated Annual Report and Accounts had been submitted before his departure, a number of queries arose during the audit process which took time for GTCNI to address due to the loss of corporate knowledge as a result of his and the Finance & Contracts Manager's departure.

Conclusion

6. In order to fulfil its financial reporting requirements, it is essential that GTCNI submits a complete 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts for audit as soon as possible.
7. I will continue to keep this area under review, reporting again as necessary.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dorinnia Carville". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dorinnia Carville
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4 October 2022