

AGENDA

**C&AG's Advisory Group Meeting
Tuesday 20th September at 2:00pm
Conference Room 2nd Floor**

SECTION 1 – PRELIMINARY/ADMINISTRATION

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of conflicts of interest
3. Minutes of meeting held 21 June 2016 and matters arising (Paper 1)

SECTION 2 – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Leadership and Management Development Strategy (Paper 2)
2. Technical Training Update (Paper 3)

SECTION 3 – AOB

1. Terms of Reference (Paper 4)

MINUTES OF C&AG'S ADVISORY GROUP MEETING TUESDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Present

- Paul Douglas (Non Executive Member - Chair)
- Áine Gallagher (Non Executive Member)
- Pat Cumiskey (Non Executive Director)
- Kieran Donnelly (Comptroller & Auditor General)
- Eddie Bradley (AAG Public Reporting)
- Janet Sides (AAG Corporate Support)
- Louise Mason (AAG Financial Audit)

Apologies

In Attendance

- Joe Campbell (Secretary)
- Brandon McMaster (Director)
- Tomas Wilkinson (Director) from 3:00pm

1. Preliminary/Administration

Declaration of Interest - There were no issues declared by members which would be in conflict with the agenda for the meeting.

Minutes of meeting held 21 June 2016 –The minutes were considered by members. The meeting was informed that the Stakeholder Engagement Team had not yet determined whether it would survey its auditees using engagement directors or continue with the electronic survey methodology. The minutes were subsequently agreed subject to minor amendment.

Matters Arising –The group was provided with an oral brief on progress in the performance management system and was advised that, while compliance was good, there were some concerns around the quality of the conversations being held. In addressing this issue, members agreed that management needed to highlight and promote the benefits of the scheme, for example in the development of the training plan to meet staff needs/requests, if the programme was to be a success.

Members agreed that the Office should continue with its planned first year evaluation of the system, which is scheduled for 31 January 2017. This issue will be retained under matters arising.

2. Training and Development

Leadership and Management Development Strategy - The paper provided to members set out the current and future requirements for training in non-technical areas as the Office moves towards a more flexible working pattern. Members were informed that this was developed taking cognizance of the age profile of the Office, in particular, middle and senior

management, and the need for succession planning. It also took account of the forthcoming Top Structure Review, the potential impact of the latest VES exercise and the findings from the BRC Assessment of Managerial Capacity.

Members were informed that the initial groundwork had identified that: (a) the Office was likely to experience a significant turnover of staff in the next 5-10 years, particularly at AM and above; and (b) the development of softer skills around social and conceptual thinking would be beneficial. It was also clear that there was a need for a formal succession plan within NIAO supported by a robust talent management strategy, the first step being the identification of “High Potentials” (self-nomination) and a strategy to manage this pool of talent. Members were informed that this could be conducted by a means of both internal and/or external assessment (assessment centre).

The paper highlighted a range of training events/programmes aimed at capacity building (all managers), high potentials and senior leadership with proposed scheduling – these included sessions on difficult conversations, leadership, influence and persuasion, coaching and leadership development. While attendance would not be mandatory, the benefits of participation would be highlighted.

In discussion, it was suggested that neither internal nor external assessment should be considered as mutually exclusive as each had their benefits, internal being particularly strong in assessing the technical aspects of the work and assessment centres in the softer skills required in the higher grades.

Members also recognised that given the lack of promotion opportunities in the short term, assessment centres provided a safe environment which would highlight to staff both their strengths and weaknesses. This would provide them with an opportunity to address any shortcomings before a formal board was established and so place them in a better position for promotion, both inside and outside the Office. Members also encouraged the Office to open access to the training courses to staff at the Auditor grade. Members welcomed the paper and briefing, and concluded that key to progressing the programme was a need to communicate the general direction to staff, tighten up the processes around assessment and to set timelines that were realistic, challenging and yet achievable.

Technical Training – Members were briefed on the Technical Unit, from its establishment in April 2016, its resourcing and its forward work programme. It was explained that in the production of the paper, the unit had identified staff needs through the performance management system, reviewed the outcomes of the Quality Control Review exercise, met with senior staff to discuss their needs and taken on board the CPD demands of the various institutions to ensure that the programme met its requirements. As a result of the implementation of the programme, which included some mandatory training, it was anticipated that flexibility between financial audit and public reporting would be enhanced, leading the office to more effective use of its resource.

The paper was welcomed by the Group who encouraged the Unit to push forward with its programme which would meet the needs of both staff and the wider Office.

3. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were considered and approved by the Group. They were subsequently signed by both the Chair and the C&AG.

4. AOB

It was agreed that the Chair would meet with the Secretary to develop a forward work programme for the Committee for the next 12 months. The proposed schedule will be considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 24th November** in the NI Audit Office Conference Room, starting at **11:00AM**.