

## MINUTES OF C&AG'S ADVISORY GROUP MEETING THURSDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2017

**Present** Paul Douglas (Non Executive Member - Chair)  
Pat Cumiskey (Non Executive Director)  
Áine Gallagher (Non Executive Member)  
Gillian Body (Non Executive Member)  
Kieran Donnelly (Comptroller & Auditor General)  
Louise Mason (Assistant Auditor General)  
Janet Sides (Assistant Auditor General)

**Apologies** Pamela McCreedy (Chief Operating Officer)

**In Attendance** Suzanne Walsh (Technical Unit Manager) – (12:10 – 12:30)  
Joe Campbell (Secretary)

### 1. Preliminary/Administration

The meeting opened with the Chair welcoming Gillian Body as a new Non Executive member to the Advisory Group.

**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 22 June 2017** –The minutes were considered and agreed.

**Matters Arising** – Matters arising relating to the provision of additional training for handling difficult conversations, the development of a fitness programme for staff, and a review of the Office's Health and Wellbeing Programme were carried forward to the November meeting of the Committee.

### 2. Digital Transformation

J Sides provided members with a background on the development of the Digital Services Strategy (DSS), which was published in February 2017, and set out the Office's agreed strategic aims arising from this process.

Members were briefed on five of the strategy's six work streams, all of which had commenced under the leadership of appointed Senior Responsible Officers. Given members' expression of interest, prior to the meeting, on the project relating to "Audit in the Digital Era", it was agreed that this would be dealt with as a separate issue.

Following the presentation, members welcomed the progress being made, raising a number of issues around the individual projects in this process. On the "Back Office Systems and Management Information" project, they welcomed the progress in addressing the issues relating to multiple input of similar data, integration between systems and enhancing the

quality of management information. In the “External interface” project, members considered the re-tendering of the printing and publication contract, alongside the appointment of new media consultants, as a major opportunity to enhance the Office’s profile, reputation and branding.

Following discussions on the strategy, members raised a number of topical issues around the wider use of IT. They enquired if the Office were aware of the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) and were assured that this had been considered and a programme of work had been established for completion by 31 December 2017 which was well in advance of the introduction of the legislation in May 2018. Progress was welcomed on this front and it was agreed that this could be a potential area for consideration in the development of the Group’s forward work programme.

Members also expressed interest in the recent NAO guide on “Cyber security and information risk guidance for Audit Committees”. In discussing the paper, members recognised that the issues around cyber security were largely being dealt with by IT Assist but, nevertheless, considered this as a potential subject for its work programme. In such circumstances, it was agreed that relevant representatives from IT Assist would be invited to attend.

On completion of the wider discussion, S Walsh was invited to provide members with a short presentation on the “Audit in the Digital Era” project. In the brief, the current arrangements were set around the use of the IDEA data interrogation software in both public reporting and financial audit. However the Office recognised that there was much more potential in the application of this, or other similar software available on the market.

Members welcomed the ongoing consultation with other audit institutions on this issue and encouraged the Office to continue to engage both externally and internally, bringing on board staff with such skillsets at all levels. There was also a recognition that the Office may not have the relevant expertise in this area and may need to engage consultants on an ongoing basis as the project evolved. It was proposed that such appointments should be on a stage by stage basis, rather than a generic appointment, as the Office could quickly find itself over-dependent on an individual or individual company. One such approach for market engagement proposed by members was the application of the “small business research initiative” methodology.

In closing, members welcomed the progress to date but on the DSS cautioned against “innovation for innovation’s sake” as the project and its developments had to be grounded in business needs.

### **3. AOB**

**Forward Work Programme** – In discussing the forward work programme members proposed, at the outset, that subjects already addressed by the group should not be precluded from the programme. Having agreed this principle, a number of matters were put forward. However, rather than confirming the programme, it was agreed that in order for C&AG to maximize the benefits of the group, he should meet with the Chair and the new COO prior to the next group meeting in November to set out a draft programme for 2018.

**Wales Visit** – Members agreed that the visit from WAO was beneficial in building up relations with the other audit institutions and an opportunity for peer review. It was recognised that there were many common themes where experiences could be shared and that such future liaison should be encouraged.

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017** in the NI Audit Office Conference Room, starting at **2:00PM**.