

C&AG's Advisory Group Terms of Reference

1. Constitution and Purpose

The Advisory Group is responsible for providing objective and impartial advice to the C&AG to assist him in the discharge of his functions. The group scrutinises the work of the NIAO in the five areas of strategic clarity, commercial sense, talented people, results focus and management information, as set out in 'Corporate governance in central government departments: Code of good practice NI 2013' issued by DoF, with the objective of providing constructive challenge.

2. Membership

The Advisory Group comprises both executives (C&AG and Assistant Auditors General) and non-executives, the latter bringing an independent and external perspective to the work of the group. Except for non-Executives who are representatives of a public audit agency in the UK or Ireland, non-executives by virtue of their membership of the NIAO Audit Committee will be ex officio members of the group.

The chair of the Advisory Group will be appointed from the non-executive members of the group by the C&AG, following endorsement by the Audit Committee of the Assembly, and will not simultaneously hold the position of Chair of the NIAO Audit Committee.

3. Responsibilities

The Advisory Group advises and challenges C&AG on the key business areas, as set out in paragraph 1 above. This will exclude any involvement in the development of the Office's programme of audit work, or direct audit work. The group has no decision-making role.

The chair will agree a forward programme of work in consultation with the group **which will be documented in the minutes of the Advisory Group meetings**. The programme should aim to cover the five areas noted above (as detailed in the Executive Team's Terms of Reference), but will be kept under regular review and amended as necessary to prioritise matters of a topical or urgent nature on which the C&AG seeks the group's advice. Meetings should deal with one major issue.

Non-executive members will have free and confidential access to the C&AG. They may also meet informally without executive members at any time, and any such meetings will be disclosed in the Annual Report.

4. Meetings

The Advisory Group will normally meet at least five times a year. The Chair of the Group may convene additional meetings, if necessary. The C&AG may also ask the Advisory Group to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which he wants the Group's advice.

A minimum of two non-executives and two executive members of the Advisory Group must be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate. If appropriate, a meeting may be conducted by conference call.

If any member who is unable to attend a meeting the Chair will brief them on the business conducted.

In the event of extenuating circumstances preventing the Chair from participating in any Advisory Group meeting, members of the Group will select one of their number to fulfil chairing duties in the Chair's absence, for that meeting.

The Advisory Group may ask any other officials of the Office to attend to assist with its discussions on any particular matter.

5. Secretariat Support

A member of the C&AG's private office will provide secretariat support to the Advisory Group. Papers required will be with members as far as practicable at least five working days in advance of the meeting. Standing agenda items are:

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of conflicts of interest
3. Minutes of previous meeting held and matters arising

The business conducted at the Advisory Group, and actions required, are recorded in minutes prepared by the secretariat. The draft Advisory Group minutes will be circulated within two weeks of the meeting to the members and agreed at the next meeting of the Group.

6. Conflicts of Interest and Conduct

Advisory Group members will apply the principles of public service as set out in the NIAO Code of Conduct. This will include advising of any external interests which may conflict with duties and responsibilities in accordance with NIAO Code of Conduct arrangements.

7. Communication

Following approval of the minutes, they will be made available on both the NIAO website and intranet. Issues raised in the Advisory Group may also be communicated through the Office's internal communication channels to staff.

The remuneration, expenses and hospitality of members of the Group will be published by the Office.

8. Review and Approval

This Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Group at least annually and presented to the C&AG for approval.

Chair's Signature Paul Douglas Date 20 September 2016

C&AG's Signature Kieran Donnelly Date 20 September 2016