

## MINUTES OF C&AG'S ADVISORY GROUP MEETING THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2017

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

**Apologies** None

**In Attendance** Caoimhe Whinnery (HR Manager)  
Joe Campbell (Secretary)

### 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 2 May 2017** –The minutes were considered and agreed.

**Matters Arising** –The meeting was informed that a review of workforce strategy, as part of a wider HR Strategy, was underway. It was agreed that this issue would carry forward to the September meeting.

In addressing the provision of additional training around difficult conversations, members were informed that some courses had already been held in 2016-17 from which there was very positive feedback. This programme will continue to develop in 2017-18. It was noted that this contract is up for renewal and will be retendered over the summer. This matter will also carry forward to the September meeting.

### 2. Health and Wellbeing

C Whinnery briefed members on the health and wellbeing paper which set out activities that had taken place over the last 12 months and the ongoing future programme of development. She informed the meeting that the Office recognised that employee health and wellbeing was a critical part of organisational effectiveness and that it was responsible for supporting staff and providing them with opportunities to have high levels of health and wellbeing.

In discussing the programme for 2017-18, it was explained that the focus will change from physical health to mental health. This will include manager awareness training for stress and mental health issues, general staff awareness sessions and general mental health and wellbeing seminars for all staff. It has also been planned to request Carecall to provide a lunch time seminar on their services.

C Whinnery also informed the meeting that the Office plans to develop a fitness programme for staff, which endeavours to cater for all fitness levels. This will include a walking group which will go out once a week at lunchtime and may include other activities such as pilates, circuits, a couch to 5k programme and a number of group cycles.

In a wider discussion around health and wellbeing, members also recognised flexible working, part-time working and compressed hours, health checks, eye tests and gym provision as further contributory factors.

In developing the programme, members encouraged management to continue to seek feedback from staff and facilitators to determine what is working and to act accordingly. However, they recognised that the success of the various schemes cannot be measured in the short term, but may be reviewed at the end of the 12 month cycle, a key indicator being the level of absenteeism in the Office.

Members also proposed that the various actions should be incorporated into the forthcoming HR Strategy, that the Wellbeing Strategy is incorporated into the NIAO Business Plan 2017-18 and that a “champion” should be appointed to promote the various benefits and schemes available within the Office.

### **3. AOB**

**Meeting with TUS** – The Chair reported back to the Group on his meeting with a NIPSA delegation.

He confirmed, at the outset, that he found the meeting to be extremely cordial and informative. In summarising his dealings with the union he informed members that he had clarified the role of the Group within its terms of reference, explained that he did not realise that NIPSA was expecting a response to the earlier meeting, and apologized for any confusion around this. In discussions with the union, the Chair also confirmed that he was aware of the various Office surveys, including the latest one conducted by NIPSA, and clarified that management was bringing all such issues arising in the Office to its non-executives.

In addressing this subject, the Group sought further clarity on how senior management communicated with staff in general. C&AG outlined the team briefing process, including its iterative development, the monthly cluster meetings where the directorate met with staff to discuss team brief and other issues. He also drew members’ attention to the publication of the minutes of the meetings of the Senior Management Team, the Advisory Group and the Audit Committee and the widespread use of the intranet to further communicate with staff.

In communicating directly with the unions, Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) meetings were highlighted alongside the adhoc meetings with HR and various ongoing meetings with Corporate Services. Members welcomed the various lines of communication, and encouraged management to continue to develop their relationship with the unions and to deal with issues as they arose, wherever possible.

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017** in the NI Audit Office Conference Room, starting at **11:30AM**.