

AGENDA

**C&AG's Advisory Group Meeting
Monday 15th February 2016 at 10:30am
Conference Room 2nd Floor**

SECTION 1 – PRELIMINARY/ADMINISTRATION

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of conflicts of interest
3. Minutes of meeting held 6 November 2015 and matters arising (Paper 1)

SECTION 2 – PROGRESSION OF THE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Update (Paper 2)

SECTION 3 – AOB

MINUTES OF C&AG'S ADVISORY GROUP MEETING THURSDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2016

Present

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

In Attendance

- Brandon McMaster (Director Corporate Support)
- 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 6 November 2015 –The minutes were noted and agreed.

Matters Arising - The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) updated the meeting on the status of secondments both in to, and out from, the Office. He also informed the Group that he had met with the Permanent Secretary of DFP, who had agreed to place the issue of secondments from the Office on the agenda of the Permanent Secretary Group. Members agreed that the principle of equality of opportunity should apply to all such posts as they arose.

The C&AG confirmed that, since the receipt of the second pulse survey, the directorate had been tasked with identifying the key issues and developing an action plan to address these. The meeting was informed that, in all likelihood, external consultancy would be used to facilitate this process. Audit Scotland, who had already been through a similar exercise, has agreed to share its experience with the Office. Members welcomed this initiative and agreed to monitor progress at future meetings under matters arising.

On the issue of progress in learning and development, the C&AG drew members' attention to the new corporate plan (2016-17 to 2018-19), and its strong focus on staff development and how the office would "approach learning and development with a renewed focus and vigour". He detailed how he intended to achieve this through a programme which included the establishment of a new technical training unit; expanding the Office's expertise in growth and innovation areas; and seeking out secondments to enhance the skills and career development of staff. Members were also informed of the forthcoming appointment of a HR Officer.

P Cumiskey and A Gallagher both proposed that for future management and directorate promotion boards and appointments, consideration should be given to the introduction of assessment centres.

2. Business Improvement Project

B McMaster provided a short presentation to members on progress on the Business Improvement Project, highlighting that all of the major components will be in place by 1 April 2016. He provided an update in relation to IT, management information, learning and development, HR, corporate support and staff surveys.

In the subsequent discussion around HR, members' attention was drawn to the high percentage of staff aged over 50 (30%). All agreed that there was a need for the development of a long term strategy for succession planning to address this issue.

In the meeting, members were provided with a summary of the number grievances taken by staff since 2014-15. This highlighted the increase of submissions in the current year and the reason for each case. A Gallagher requested that the Group should be provided with further information around commencement dates, current status and, where possible, the outcome of each of the grievances. B McMaster confirmed that all such cases are now dealt with through an independent review and decision making processes. This was welcomed by the Group.

The Group was told that Cluster 4 will be delivering a series of presentations to the operational staff setting out Cluster 4's roles and responsibilities, ascertaining the operational clusters' expectations of Cluster 4 and in turn their expectations of the operational clusters. It was anticipated that this would provide all staff with a better understanding of the challenges and pressures facing the Cluster 4.

3. AOB

C&AG provided members with a brief outline of the corporate plan which had been approved by the NI Assembly Audit Committee on 2nd February 2016. He drew their attention to the key issues, including a 5% cut to the Office's budget in 2016-17 a greater focus on good practice guides; the development of new strategic priorities; and the need to address the forthcoming challenges of digitalisation.