

AGENDA

**C&AG's Advisory Group Meeting
Thursday 17th September 2015 at 1.30pm
Conference Room 2nd Floor**

SECTION 1 – PRELIMINARY/ADMINISTRATION

1. Apologies
2. Declaration of conflicts of interest
3. Minutes of meeting held 11th June 2015 and matters arising

SECTION 2 – BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

1. April Pulse Survey: Summary of Action Points
2. April Pulse Survey: Summary of key themes identified from respondent comments
3. Northern Ireland Audit Office Pulse Survey – Results April 2015

SECTION 3 –AOB

MINUTES OF C&AG'S ADVISORY GROUP MEETING THURSDAY 17th September 2015

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

In Attendance Brandon McMaster (Director Corporate Support)
Gillian Body (AAG – Wales Audit Office)
Joe Campbell (Secretary)

1. Preliminary/Administration

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

Minutes of meeting held 11 June 2015 –The meeting was informed that, as part of the preparatory work for the Office's Corporate Plan 2016-17 to 2018-19, a workforce planning exercise had been commissioned. This will take into account a draft policy on the realignment of audit work. Louise Mason informed the meeting that, for planning purposes, her initial review of accounts had identified that 52 per cent of the audits (by number) could be reallocated to lower grade staff.

C&AG recognised that the resulting workforce plan may well identify a mismatch between existing resources and what is required going forward. However, it is important from a strategic perspective to establish the resource baseline to which the Office needs to work towards as this will impact on decisions about recruitment and succession planning.

It was agreed that:

- a meeting between the Non-Executives and the Employee Engagement Group and TUS should take place prior to the next Advisory Group meeting; and
- the matter of secondments should be carried forward to the next meeting of the Group and considered in conjunction with the Learning and Development Strategy which is being finalised.

The minutes were noted and agreed, subject to minor amendment.

2. Business Improvement Project

HSE Survey - B McMaster provided a short brief on the HSE Survey conducted with staff. He stated that HSE were finalising the report, but the initial draft indicated that staff were, as a rule, welcoming the new flexible structure. However, a number of issues remained to be addressed.

Voluntary Exit Scheme – The Group noted that 56 staff had applied in tranche 1 and 15 offers had been issued, seven of which had been accepted. A second tranche of offers will be made in December from which it is anticipated that a further seven to eight staff may be released from 31 March 2016, subject to the needs of the Office.

Pulse Survey - B McMaster informed the meeting that pulse surveys are planned to take place every quarter, the next being due at the end of September 2015. An action plan from the initial survey and questions for the next survey have been drafted (copies in Advisory Group packs). The new questions seek to assess staff perceptions of the BIP project given the successful delivery of the financial audits pre-Summer Recess. Given that the September exercise will be the second survey, the Chair requested that a “compare and contrast” exercise is conducted with appropriate explanations provided for variances. This will be considered at the next meeting of the Group.

G Body noted that the pulse survey developed by the Office had more questions than a similar exercise developed in Wales; it was completed more often (every 6 months in Wales in contrast to every 3 months moving forward) and there was more opportunity for NIAO staff to comment. On the latter point she suggested, and the Group agreed, that the comments box should be broken into three sections with a view to identifying what went well, what didn't go so well, and what would staff do differently.

She also enquired if the pulse survey results could be broken down by cluster/grade. It was explained that results are aggregated at a high level in order to retain anonymity and provide staff the opportunity to speak freely.

Learning and Development Strategy - Given that the next meeting of the Group will discuss the issue of staff training, the Chair requested that a draft copy is issued to Non Executive Directors at the earliest opportunity.

3. AOB

No other issues were raised. The next meeting of the group will be held at 1:30pm on Friday 6th November at 13:30.