

MINUTES OF C&AG'S ADVISORY GROUP HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2013

In Attendance

Gary Martin (Chair – Non Executive Member)
Mary Halton (Non Executive Member)
Daniel McLarnon (Non Executive Member)
Kieran Donnelly (Comptroller & Auditor General)
Louise Mason (AAG Division F)
Janet Sides (AAG Division A)
Eddie Bradley (AAG Division V)
Sean McKay (Director Division V)

Joe Campbell (Secretary)

1.1 Apologies.

There was full attendance of members to the meeting. In welcoming attendees, the Chair set out the role of the newly constituted Group as previously agreed. As part of the subsequent discussion, it was agreed that the NIAO website should be updated to reflect the new structure.

1.2 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

There were no issues declared by members which would be in conflict with the agenda for the meeting.

1.3 Minutes of meeting held 13th September and matters arising

Minutes were agreed subject to editorial amendment to paragraph 4.

2.1 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Mrs. Mason introduced the paper. The members were informed that the terms of reference had been submitted to and approved by the Executive Team in its meeting of 28 October. Members' attention was drawn to the scope of the exercise – and that the strategy would initially focus on external stakeholders.

Mr McKay presented the document and members discussed, in some detail, the principles and approach adopted in the development of the strategy. There was a general acceptance that stakeholder engagement was an important area of focus for the office moving forward.

In progressing this important area of strategic importance for the Office, regard had to be given to the context of the NIAO's public facing work, members recognizing the key relationship it has with the PAC. There was also a need to work, and be seen to work, within the grain of the PFG to ensure that the wider

political stakeholder group is aware that our work is topical, proportionate and timely. On a more general level, members also proposed that an NIAO presentation should become part of the induction program for all new MLAs.

Correspondingly, members agreed that this process would consider engagement with the departments. It was suggested that the Office should attend PSG on an annual basis to set out its forward work program and the rationale for it, enhancing understanding about the work of NIAO and its purpose.

In more general terms, members agreed that there was a need for the strategy to focus more on listening to the stakeholder. They recognized that there was a need to engage with the key internal stakeholder group of staff as part of the engagement strategy in its totality.

In identifying where the office should focus its efforts, it was proposed that well recognized stakeholder engagement tools should be applied in the development of the strategy in order to apply proportionate effort to the various stakeholder groupings. Such an approach would also allow NIAO to engage appropriately with each stakeholder group identified as part of this ongoing process.

1.2 Governance Arrangements

The members were provided with an oral brief on progress in the development of new governance arrangements within the Office. Details were provided on the establishment of sub groups to support Executive Team business. The assignment of individuals to the subgroups would be determined by the Executive Team.

It was agreed that the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of each of the sub groups should be invited to the next Advisory Group Meeting.

Members encouraged the establishment of more regular meetings of the full Directorate; it was proposed that they should meet both pre and post Executive meetings, the former meeting for consultation and the latter to communicate the outcomes.

1.1 Emerging Issues

The Group noted that the mandate for the current membership ended on 31 May 2014. However, given that the members wanted to complete the work flow in the annual cycle, it was agreed that their term should extend to the end of June 2014.

Members were also updated on progress in the Business Improvement Programme. It was agreed that there was a need to enhance the visibility of the

project and, as part of that, a communication strategy should be developed. It was further agreed that the Group should receive an update on a six monthly basis.

The Group was informed that the Office's monthly team brief exercise was now supported by a detailed written brief and that this had received positive feedback to date.

The next Advisory Group meeting will be held on Friday 7th February 2014.