

## **NIAO Advisory Board Meeting Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 9.30**

Present: 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)

In Attendance: Calwell Steele (Secretary)

### **1. Apologies.**

There was full attendance of members and the Chair welcomed those present to this additional meeting of the Advisory Board.

### **2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

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

### **3. Role of the Advisory Board**

The meeting was held to continue the review of the NIAO's governance arrangements and in particular to consider the role the Advisory Board plays in the legal and statutory context of the position of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Members agreed that in relation to the primacy of authority vested in the C&AG's statutory position as a Corporation Sole, board governance arrangements were not the optimum arrangement for NIAO. Consequently, under the current statutory position a re-designation of the advisory board to become the C&AG's Advisory Group was more appropriate and would reflect more accurately the entity's role.

### **4. Other issues discussed at the meeting centered around the impact this change would have on the workings of the Audit Committee (AC), Executive Team (ET) and Directorate Forum(DF). The impact on role of the AC will be discussed at its next meeting on 30 September 2013. The ET and DF, introduced on foot of a previous review of NIAO governance structures in 2010/11, the Mawhood Review, are the principal mechanisms for decision making across the senior management cadre of the office. The outworking of this earlier governance review, though having a clear rationale in forming a focused ET supported by a wider DF marshalling the combined talent and skills of the wider director team, has resulted, unintentionally in the division and formal separation of responsibilities between ET and DF brought about**

by the Review: this has resulted in what could be argued to be a lack of cohesive engagement between these two entities. The current, holistic review of governance arrangements initiated by the Advisory Board seeks to address some of these issues arising from the Mawhood review of 2010/11.

5. It was further proposed that the re-designation of the of the Advisory Board as the Comptroller and Auditor General's Advisory Group will result in the following outcomes:
  - a. clarity regarding the primacy of decision making at executive level being effected through a series of high level, functional committees within NIAO, each with its own discrete area of responsibility. These may deal with issues such as: executive direction; strategy; stakeholder engagement; and governance and compliance issues, for instance. The precise nature of these discrete areas of responsibility is a matter for the further consideration of the senior management of the office;
  - b. the population of these committees should be drawn from the entire senior management grouping – C&AG, AAGs and directors. A number of suggestions were made on about the nature of the overall body these committees would report to, including: a Leadership Team structure; a Functional Leadership structure; or a type of Committee Chair structure centering around the role of the C&AG. Again, the finer detail of these matters will be considered in greater depth by senior management.
6. It was further agreed that the Chair would provide a summary paper of proposals by 20 September and senior management will report back on their deliberations around these matters by 27 September 2013, for further discussion with non-executive colleagues on 30 September. Regardless of which precise structure is chosen, one issue emerging from the meeting was that the overall body at executive level will be drawn from a wider membership than the current ET, with the specific aim of securing maximum engagement from the wider directorate of NIAO.
7. **Corporate Plan**

Members held a general discussion on the proposed content and structure of the next Corporate Plan. Areas to cover include good practice, engagement with PAC, handling fraud, business improvement and internal structures.
8. The next scheduled meeting of the C&AG's Advisory group is on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013.