



# NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

## MEETING 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023, NIPSO, Progressive House

### Members Present:

Dónall Curtin – Chair; (DC)  
 Terry McGonigal – Independent Member; (TM)  
 Patricia Snell – Independent Member (PS)

### In Attendance:

Margaret Kelly – Accounting Officer/Ombudsman; (MK)  
 Sean Martin –Deputy Ombudsman; (SM)  
 Gary Currie – NIAO; (GC)  
 Philip Whitehead – ASM (PW)  
 Sarah Sherry – NIPSO; Secretariat (SS)

Item	Minute	Action
1.	<b>Apologies</b> Apologies received from Brian Clerkin - ASM	
2.	<b>Conflicts of Interest</b> DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda.  No conflicts were noted.	
3.	<b>Minutes</b> Minutes from 20 <sup>th</sup> and 27 <sup>th</sup> October 2022 were agreed upon.	
4	<b>Update on Action Points</b>  <i>Information Security Policy</i> – a new update of April 23  <i>Advisory Committee/Effectiveness Review (ARC)</i> – HR tenders letters have been sent out – a decision to be made on schedule  <i>Continuity Plan</i> – Near completed – currently updating staff contact details	SS – update action points  SM – schedule  SM/SS – send out continuity plan

<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>Ombudsman Update (verbal)</b></p> <p>Recruitment for the Deputy Ombudsman took place before Christmas, Rodney Allen (Audit Office) and Rosemary Agnew (Scottish Ombudsman) were also on the panel, and SM was formally appointed.</p> <p><i>CARE Package</i> has now been rolled out and feedback from staff is positive</p> <p><i>Media Coverage</i> – there has been significant coverage recently, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Home Reports</li> <li>• Benefits case</li> <li>• Mobuoy Report regarding planning and environmental issues</li> <li>• Radio 4 – You and Yours</li> </ul> <p><i>LGES</i> – All the surveys to CEOs, Complainants and Councillors have been completed regarding the LGES function – currently working on the findings.</p> <p><i>OI</i> – Communication on Waiting List Report is nearly completed, and MK is considering a joint approach with NIAO who is looking at the overall management of waiting lists with a possible plan to launch both reports together.</p>	
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Financial Management</b></p> <p>SM advised that the approach on procedures and cost allocation has been updated.</p> <p>IT costs have increased, but efficiencies have been achieved by removing the need to remote onto the system and by returning 2<sup>nd</sup> devices.</p> <p>DC commented that the new financial report layout is an improvement and is more user friendly.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Case Performance Management</b></p> <p>SM reported that 7 out of the 8 KPIs are being met and exceeded. KPI 8 target is not being met, due to the change in finance staff in Q1. Updates are provided at the monthly SMT meetings, the target is 98% and currently stands at 83.2%.</p> <p>MK commented that KPI2 is being met however staff are under a degree of pressure due to delayed responses which can lead to breached cases.</p> <p>MK provided an overview of adjudications to date.</p> <p>To date there have been 29 Pre-hearing Reviews and 5 cases ongoing</p>	
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p> <p>Since the last ARC meeting 2 final reports have been issued.</p> <p><b>Communications and Stakeholder Engagement</b> – satisfactory assurance.</p> <p><b>Review of Strategic Planning and KPIs</b> – satisfactory assurance.</p>	

	<p>MK thanked the staff that worked hard on the two reports</p> <p>PW continued that in 23/24 there will be 3 reports</p> <p>1 – Review of Complaints Standards Function 2 – Review of financial systems 3 – Follow up on Audit recommendations</p> <p>Discussion took place regarding the duplication of audits over a short period, and PW to provide a list of other possible reviews that other public services organisations have used.</p>	
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update</b></p> <p>SM reported that work is ongoing completing the older recommendations and the recent communications and engagement recommendations.</p> <p>DC advised NIPSO could consider bringing in an expert on a short contract to work on the finance manual.</p>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b>External Audit – NIAO Update</b></p> <p>GC reported that the 21-23 audit is completed.</p> <p>There were no adjustments to the figures.</p> <p>The two recommendations have been accepted.</p> <p>22-23 Audit strategy will be tabled at the next ARC meeting in April.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>Business Plan – Q3</b></p> <p>SM advised that the plan has been updated to the end of Q3, and is pleased with the process, however, some actions have been moved to next year.</p> <p>SM highlighted the one red item, which is the implementation of the HR management system, the final decision is still to be made at SMT.</p> <p>TM commented that lessons have been learned not to over stretch, as this distracts from the good work which has been completed.</p> <p>DC requested that a fuller explanation to be provided when a target date has been moved</p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>Risk Register - Q3</b></p> <p>SM explained that the Risk Register was looked at in December and January by SMT. The 6 key risks originally identified and agreed upon by SMT are still relevant and are unchanged.</p> <p>Clarity around the budget had been provided as it had been approved by the Assembly, but no Assembly gives a level of uncertainty for the Complaints Standards work as this may require more resource.</p>	

	<p>DC suggested that Information Governance is a key risk for all organisations and should be an area of focus. He also recommended considering phishing testing be completed to check the effectiveness of current messaging on this issue.</p> <p>SM confirmed that IT Assist does send out warning emails regularly and Cyber Training is mandatory for staff. SM will bring it to SMT for further discussion</p>	<p>SM – bring a suggestion to SMT regarding testing</p>
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Comment on Information Items</b></p> <p>DC found the DAO and FD Letter databases useful</p>	
<b>15</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>No AOB</p>	
<b>16</b>	<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 – Progressive House, 10 am</b></p>	