



NIPSO AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MINUTES

MEETING 25th April 2024, 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)
Kirsty McCool – Director of Governance and Support Services (KM)
Kathy Doey – NIAO; (KD)
Philip Whitehead - ASM (PW)
Corinne Nelson – Director of Investigations (CN)
Sinead Sargent – Director of Investigations (SSt)
Sarah Sherry – NIPSO; Secretariat (SS)

Item	Minute	Action
1.	Apologies No Apologies	
2.	Conflicts of Interest DC invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.	
3.	Minutes Minutes from 19 th January 2024 were agreed upon.	
4	Update on Action Points SM updated the following: <i>Financial Rules Document</i> – Is in a draft form – hope to bring it to the next ARC meeting. <i>Advisory Committee/Effectiveness Review (ARC)</i> – due date to be completed by August 2.	

<p>5</p>	<p>Ombudsman Update (verbal)</p> <p>MK advised that the office has been particularly busy over recent months, with a high number of complaints, with increases at every stage of NIPSO's case handling process.</p> <p>Since the return of the Assembly, MK has met with the Audit Committee who have recognised the pressures. The Audit Committee have given support for the Complaints Standards work with Care Homes and authorised an increase in the budget of approximately 500K.</p> <p>In March NIPSO held a Patient Safety Conference, the keynote speaker was Sir Robert Francis QC. Health Minister Robin Swan opened the conference. Excellent feedback from nurses, GP managers, etc has been received. Work is now ongoing to push for a Patient Safety Framework</p> <p>PS confirmed that she attended the conference, and remarked it was an excellent conference and she also received positive feedback from friends and colleagues who also participated in the conference.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Financial Management</p> <p>DC commented on the importance of implementing the new finance system as soon as possible in the new financial year.</p>	<p>KM – new finance system</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Case Performance Management</p> <p>SM reported all the KPIs were met, however, there has been considerable pressure on staff and options are being considered on the best way to deal with the pressure. Both DC and PS relayed the importance of staff communicating pressures to SMT so plans can be put in place.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>CN and SSt gave a presentation to the Audit and Risk Committee on Quality Assurance within Maladministration.</p> <p>DC thanked both CN and SSt for a very comprehensive insight into Quality Assurance and the journey ahead.</p> <p>SM advised that plans are in place to introduce the facility to record calls to aid learning and further improve the experience of those who contact the office.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>PW summarised the final two reports, which brings the 23-24 audit to a close</p> <p>Follow Up Review 23/24</p> <p>PW explained that of the 28 recommendations assessed, 22 recommendations were fully implemented, 3 were partially implemented and the remaining 3 were no longer applicable which related to HR software which is no longer in use.</p>	

	<p>It was recognised that good progress has been made on progressing outstanding recommendations with a considerable reduction in the number outstanding achieved (from 15 in last year's report to 3)</p> <p>Complaints Standards Function Review 23/24</p> <p>PW reported that he worked with SSt on this looking at the adequacy and effectiveness of the Complaints Standards function. 5 priority 3 recommendations were given. The existing systems in place for the complaint standards function provide satisfactory assurance regarding the effective and efficient achievement of NIPSO's objectives.</p>	
10	<p>Schedule of Progress Against Audit Recommendations Database Update</p> <p>SM highlighted the progress made recently by SMT progressing the older recommendations</p> <p>2 – Finance Manual – nearly finalised. 32 – People Strategy – currently ongoing.</p>	
11	<p>External Audit – NIAO Update</p> <p>KD summarised key messages from the NIPSO Audit Strategy Report 23-24</p> <p><i>Significant Audit Risk</i> – No significant risks to the organisation have been identified other than the presumed risk of the risk of fraud on management override of controls, this is a risk that is common for all audits and has to be considered.</p> <p><i>Timetable</i> – Agreed dates are set out, with a final report to those charged with Governance issued by 12th August 24</p> <p>KD asked members to consider a risk assessment and advise her of any other risks that should be addressed. Any knowledge of actual or expected fraud, is to also be reported to KD.</p>	
12	<p>Business Plan – Q4</p> <p>SM highlighted the following:</p> <p>There were 74 actions, and 59 have been completed.</p> <p>Any of the actions not completed are rolling into the 24/25 business plan.</p>	
13	<p>Risk Register – Q4</p> <p>KM to forward the new version to ARC members.</p>	<p>KM - Risk Register to be emailed to members</p>

14	<p>Draft Annual Report and Accounts</p> <p>The draft annual reports and accounts were emailed to members the day before the meeting, and members agreed to read through the Report and Account and go back to KM via email before the following week.</p>	
15	<p>Heads Together Final Paper on ARC Review</p> <p>SM and MK are content with the draft paper and are content with the recommendation to Recruit a 4th ARC Member to strengthen the skills set of the committee.</p> <p>DC commented that while the report emphasises the importance of finance/auditor's skill set, however in his experience on audit risk committees there is also the need for risk management skills, specialist IT skills and a understanding of good corporate governance.</p>	
16	<p>Review of Effectiveness of ARC</p> <p>DC recommended KM to draft a short paper, which is split into two parts recommendations the committee need to look at in the next 12 months and longer-term recommendations.</p> <p>TM advised that further work to be done on the Risk Register and Assurance Mapping.</p>	<p>KM – Recommendat ion Paper to be emailed to members</p>
17	<p>Corporate Governance Framework</p> <p>SM advised that the newly updated document is a living document recording the overarching governance arrangements and outlines the governance structure including roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>DC commented that he was delighted that it was completed.</p> <p>DC suggested that ARC can meet more than 4/5 times a year if needed.</p>	
18	<p>Comment on Information Items</p> <p>DoF recommendations to be included in an action tracker.</p>	
19	<p>AOB</p> <p>No AOB</p>	
20	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>Wednesday 21st August 2024 – Progressive House, Pre-Meet at 9.30am for Chairperson, Committee Members, Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman</p> <p>Main Meeting 10.00am</p>	