

## **NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD**

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 2021 AT 2.00PM AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST AND VIA ZOOM VIDEO FACILITY**

### **PRESENT:**

#### **MEMBERS**

Mr Colm McKenna\* (Chair)  
Mr Edgar Jardine\* (Vice-Chair)  
Mr Michael Atkinson\*  
Mr Frank McManus\*

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

Mrs Sharan Dustagheer\*

#### **INTERNAL AUDIT**

- (1) Mrs Lacey Walker\*, Head of Internal Audit  
Mrs Cathy Hadden\* Internal Audit Manager

#### **NORTHERN IRELAND AUDIT OFFICE**

Mr Tomas Wilkinson\*, Director

#### **ASM ACCOUNTANTS**

Mrs Christine Hagan\*, Director

#### **ACCOUNTANT ADVISOR**

Mr Charles Barnett\*

#### **OFFICIALS**

- Mrs Amanda Stewart, Chief Executive\*  
Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of Resources  
(2) Mr Adrian McNamee, Director of Performance  
Four Board Officials

\*Attended the meeting via video conference.

(1) Left meeting at 2.40pm

(2) Item 10 only.

## **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr Gerry Kelly MLA and Mrs Joanne Bunting MLA.

## **2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No conflicts of interest were declared and the Agenda was agreed.

No Member raised any item that they wanted to discuss under 'Any Other Business'.

## **3. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 March 2021 be approved.

## **4. COMMITTEE ACTION LOG**

The Director of Resources presented an overview of the Committee Action Log noting that of the five actions that had been raised at the previous committee meeting in March 2021, one action had been closed and four actions which related to the Corporate Risk Register would be discussed further at the committee meeting in June 2021 when the Corporate Risk Register was presented.

## **5. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS**

There was no Chair's Business to make Members aware of.

## **6. VERBAL UPDATE PSNI ARAC MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2021**

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the material items considered at the PSNI's ARAC meeting on 27 April 2021 which she had attended as an Observer including:

- The PSNI's 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan which had been impacted as a result of COVID-19 and the number of audits undertaken during the year had been reduced. The PSNI Head of Internal Audit was satisfied that an Annual Audit Opinion could be provided to support the finalising of the PSNI's Annual Report and Financial Statements as the audit undertaken during the year focussed on high risk and high value business areas.
- The PSNI's 2021-22 Internal Audit Plan was also discussed which would incorporate the audits not undertaken during 2020-21.
- The PSNI ARAC had undertaken two days of risk training with an external facilitator with additional training planned and would include PSNI staff involved in risk management too.

The Chief Executive further noted that at the PSNI ARAC meeting T/ Assistant Chief Constable John Roberts had discussed with the Committee the age of the PSNI firearms ranges which were part of the PSNI Estate (which is owned by the Board). It was agreed to ascertain if this matter had been added to the PSNI Corporate Risk Register **(AP1)**

The Chief Executive further noted that the PSNI ARAC had discussed a PSNI Managing Attendance and Sick Absence Deep Dive and she had shared with the Committee the Terms of Reference of the Board's PSNI Sick Absence Review being completed at the request of the Resources Committee.

## **7. NIPB INTERNAL AUDIT**

### **7.1 NIPB Internal Annual Opinion 2020-21**

The Head of Internal Audit presented the Annual Report and Opinion for year ended 31 March 2021 highlighting that Annual Report and Opinion was a key document in terms of the Accounting Officer's Annual Governance Statement which is included within the Annual Report and Financial Statements. Internal Audit's Opinion on NIPB's internal governance, risk management and internal control system was 'satisfactory' and was based on both internal audit activity during the year and also 'satisfactory' opinions provided in previous years. Members noted that during the year Internal Audit had operated with independence and objectivity and in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and had access to both the Accounting Officer (Chief Executive) and Committee Chair during the year.

The Chair noted that he and other Members had met privately with the Head of Internal Audit and Internal Audit Manager earlier in the day thanked them for the work undertaken during the year.

### **7.2 NIPB Internal Audit Open Recommendations**

The Director of Resources provided an overview of the progress made in implementing open audit recommendations noting that the four recommendations remained open and one recommendation made following the audit of HR Recruitment had been implemented and was closed.

In response to a Member's questions about the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SARs) that were outstanding, the Chief Executive noted that the backlog of SARs had been cleared but SARs continued to be received and so ongoing effort was required to maintain momentum in processing them and additional resources for the team was

being considered. In addition FOI requests continued to be processed. The Communications Manager also provided an update on engagement with the Information Commissioner's Office.

The Chief Executive noted that the introduction of the Troubles Related Pensions Scheme had the potential to increase the number of SARs received by the Board since some applicant's to the scheme may wish to obtain copies of the information held by the Board in relation to their Ill Health Retirement or Injury on Duty award applications.

#### **8. NIPB ACCOUNTING OFFICER END OF YEAR STEWARDSHIP STATEMENT**

The Committee noted the Accounting Officer's Stewardship Statement submitted to the Department of Justice for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

#### **9. DRAFT ACCOUNTING OFFICER GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

Members considered the draft Governance Statement to be included in the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, which was a key document within the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Members discussed proposed changes to the documents for Officials to consider and incorporate into the draft Governance Statement, and it was agreed that Officials would update the wording of Governance Statement in accordance with feedback received. **(AP2)**

#### **10. DRAFT NIPB ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2020-21 INCLUDING:** **Draft Board Chair's Report** **Draft Performance Report** **Draft Accountability Report**

## **Draft Financial Statements**

The Committee considered the NIPB's draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 including the Chair's Report, Performance Report, Accountability Report and Financial Statements.

Members discussed with Officials suggested changes to the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 and Officials agreed to circulate the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements to all Board Members for information and to request any feedback be received by 3 June in order that Officials can action requested amendments in advance of the next ARAC meeting in June 2021. **(AP3)**

### **11. COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

The Director of Partnership and Board Vice-Chair provided an overview of the Committee Annual Effectiveness process noting that all Members had been asked to complete a survey about the committee's activity during 2020-21. The Effectiveness Review was both an annual requirement but was also intended to inform an ongoing review of the Board's Committee structure. Members noted a paper summarising the survey responses received from all committees as part of the review. Members also noted that there would be further discussion about the Board's Committee structure at a Board away day to be held later in the year. The Chair advised that it is his intention for the Committee to have further discussion in respect of the Committee's Effectiveness Review at the next meeting in June 2021.

### **12. COMMUNICATION ISSUES/ OPPORTUNITIES**

No communication issues were raised.

### **13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

In response to a request from the Chair the Chief Executive provided an update on staffing issues including issues regarding the attraction and retention of staff given the ongoing external recruitment competitions by the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). The Chief Executive further noted that the preparation for the Board's accommodation move to James House in early 2022 was extremely time consuming given the volume of hard copy information stored in Waterside Tower which had to be individually sifted and the fact that his additional workload had impacted significantly on staff capacity. By way of mitigation staff had been offered overtime however there had been limited uptake. The Chief Executive advised and that it is proposed that no committee meetings are held in July and August 2021 and January 2022 to allow staff to focus on the accommodation move.

#### **14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee would meet on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 10am.

(Meeting closed at 3.45 pm).

#### **CORPORATE SERVICES**

**Date:** May 2021

**Chair**