

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

**MINUTES OF MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD
ON THURSDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 2PM AT THE NORTHERN IRELAND
POLICING BOARD WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST AND VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS

Mr Colm McKenna (Chair)
Mr Edgar Jardine (Vice-Chair)
Mr Michael Atkinson
Mr Frank McManus
Mr Gerry Kelly
Mr Trevor Clarke

IN ATTENDANCE:

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Mrs Sharan Dustagheer*

INTERNAL AUDIT

Mr Michael Matthews
Mrs Cathy Hadden*

**NORTHERN IRELAND AUDIT
OFFICE**

Mr Tomas Wilkinson*

ASM ACCOUNTANTS

Mrs Judith Shortall*

OFFICIALS

Mrs Amanda Stewart, Chief Executive
Ms Jenny Passmore, Director of
Resources

Three Board Officials

*Attended the meeting via video conference.

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

The Chair welcomed new committee member Mr Trevor Clarke and the new Head of Internal Audit Mr Michael Matthews to the meeting.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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

No Member raised any matters for discussion under 'Any Other Business'.

3. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 17 June 2021 be approved.

4. COMMITTEE ACTION LOG

The Committee noted the updates detailed within the Action Log. In relation to Action Point 1 from the meeting on **17 June 2021** the Director of Resources advised that the Board's Pension Advisor and the Pension Board Chair have been invited to attend the next meeting in December to brief the committee on the Police Pension Board Governance

Updates on action points 1 and 2 from the meeting on **19 May 2021** were considered at the last meeting on 17 June 2021 and these action points have now been closed.

In respect of Action Point 1 from the meeting on **25 March 2021** the Chief Executive advised that she had discussed the issue of a shared objective for PSNI and the Board at the PSNI ARAC meeting in June 2021. It was agreed that there was link with PSNI within Risk 1 of the Board's Corporate Risk Register in respect of actions taken by the PSNI which may have an impact on public confidence in policing. During discussion it was noted that Members felt there was value in the maintaining the working relationship between the Board's and PSNI's ARAC.

5 CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

5.1 DAO 03/21 – Guidance on the NI Public Audit Process including PAC scrutiny of Public Spending

The Chair advised this guidance document was issued on 24 June 2021 which outlined the NI Public Audit Process including PAC scrutiny of Public Spending.

Members **NOTED** the report.

5.2 DAO 04/21 – Continued payment of Grants during the period of the Covid-19 response

The Chair noted this correspondence was issued on 8 July 2021 and replaces DAO 09/20 which advises as to the guidance to be followed in respect of the payment of grants to organisations outside government including, but not exclusively, within the voluntary and community sector as part of the Covid-19 response.

Members **NOTED** the report.

5.3 DAO 05/21 – Contracts Register

The Chair noted correspondence which was issued on 7 September 2021 outlining the requirements for Departments and their Arm's Length Bodies to maintain an accurate Contracts Register.

The Director of Resources confirmed the Board's Contracts Register is being updated to reflect this guidance. In response to a question from a Member regarding the current status of the PSNI's Contract Register it was agreed that this would be a matter for the Resources Committee to address.

Members **NOTED** the report.

5.4 RQIA Report

The Chair noted the report dated 8 December 2020 from David Nicholl.

Members noted how valuable the report was in terms of learning opportunities and suggested that it may be useful to have the author of the report attend the next Audit and Risk workshop hosted by DoJ. The DoJ official undertook to feedback the comments to the relevant staff in the Department.

5.5 Deloitte Global Audit Committee Survey

The Chair noted this report dated October 2020 and advised it is a very useful report which highlights the importance of the Internal Audit approach to business improvement.

Members **NOTED** the report.

5.6 Verbal update from meeting with Clarke Black and Stephen Hodkinson

The Chair advised he met with Clarke Black (Chair of DoJ ARAC) and Stephen Hodgkinson (PSNI ARAC Chair) in July. The Chair stated that both he, as ARAC Chair at NIPB and the PSNI ARAC Chair should be included in DoJ Audit Chairs' Forum. Clarke Black, ARAC Chair at DoJ agreed. The DoJ official confirmed that it is planned to hold a forum, however no dates have been confirmed as yet. DoJ will ensure the Chair receives an invitation once details of the event are confirmed.

6. PSNI'S AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 21 JUNE 2021 AND 28 SEPTEMBER 2021 – VERBAL UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided an update on key issues from the PSNI ARAC meeting on 28 September 2021. It was noted that there has been an impact on the PSNI Internal Audit programme of work as a result of COVID, however a number of audits have recently commenced in order to rectify the situation. PSNI's main accounts and pension accounts had an unqualified audit opinion and were laid before the Assembly on 6 July 2021. The NIAO Continuous Improvement report on Continuous Improvements Arrangements within PSNI is due to be published in October 2021 .

7. NIPB INTERNAL AUDIT

7.1 NIPB Internal Audit Progress Report

Internal Audit Officials presented a paper which noted that two reviews commenced in September 2021 – Police Appeals Tribunal and Police Pensions and Internal Dispute Resolutions. Another review, on Information Security and Management is due to start in October 2021. A review of the Police Property Fund is scheduled to commence in the last quarter of 2021/2022 and the days allocated to the Police Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) are intended to cover any audit work that it is felt is

necessary should any issues arise in year.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the number of days set aside for Contingency/consultancy and the assurance framework between the Board and the Chief Constable Members were advised that whilst the Chief Constable does provide an annual Assurance Statement to the Board the area could be looked at further. The Chief Executive commented that in her opinion there are sufficient days in the Internal Audit workplan to cover this issue if required.

Members discussed the Board's responsibilities regarding the PSNI Estate and the new PSNI Estate Strategy. Concerns were raised regarding the Board's input to the strategy and it was noted that this will be presented at the next Resources Committee meeting on 28 October 2021.

7.2 Internal Audit Open Recommendations

The Director of Resources noted there are currently eight open recommendations and three of those are partially achieved.

There are four recommendations from the recent review of Business Continuity which officials will continue to progress, however once the Board moves to James House a new plan will need to be developed.

There are two recommendations from the FOI and GDPR review which are ongoing and it was noted that the backlog in this area has been added to the Corporate Risk Register as discussed at the Board meeting earlier this month.

In response to a question regarding the backlog of FOI's the Chief Executive advised the majority of these requests were relating to Police Administration Branch and the backlog was largely due to the complexity of the requests and

the resource needed both to compile the response and also to check and authorise it whilst continuing to manage other competing priorities and deadlines within the branch. It was noted the staffing structure within the branch will be reviewed.

8. EXTERNAL AUDIT

8.1 Final Report to those charged with Governance

A representative from the NI Audit Office presented the final Report to those charged with Governance and advised the Committee that the C&AG had certified the Board's Annual Report and Accounts on 6 July 2021 with an unqualified audit opinion with no recommendations, and they were laid before the Assembly on 8 July 2021.

9. NIPB CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Director of Resources presented the Corporate Risk Register and advised this is reviewed by the senior management team (SMT) at regular intervals. The total number of Corporate Risks is seven. The Director of Resources noted since the last committee meeting in June SMT have updated the risks in terms of actions and mitigation and have reduced the risk scores in two of the risks and a new risk on the backlog of Fol and DPA requests had been added as discussed at the Board meeting in September 2021. In response to a question from a Member regarding Risk 4 relating to the Independent Medical Referee Process the Chief Executive acknowledged that this risk needs to be reviewed and developed further and has asked the T/Director of Police Administration to take this forward. **(AP1)**

Members also noted the Pension Board's risk register which is reviewed by the Pension Board at each meeting.

10. DRAFT BI-ANNUAL ACCOUNTING OFFICER STEWARDSHIP STATEMENT

Members noted the Chief Executive's Draft Mid Year Stewardship Statement. The Chief Executive signed it on the day of the Committee as it was her last day in her role as Accounting Officer. The Statement included one exception in respect of a priority 1 Audit Recommendation to implement a Case Management System in Police Administration Branch. This recommendation has largely been superseded with the publication of the NIAO report on the Injury on Duty Scheme which recommends a fundamental review of the scheme.

11. NIPB COMPLAINTS UPDATE

The Director of Resources noted that one new complaint had been received on 26 August 2021. This is the only complaint received to date in this financial year and falls within the remit of Police Administration Branch.

Members discussed the potential for the introduction of a recording/telephony system to monitor external telephone call with a view of minimising the potential risk of disputes of official conversations or misinterpretation of decisions. Officials noted there had been a telephone recording system in place a number of years ago but that it hasn't been used for some time. Members agreed that there should be a system in place throughout the building and asked officials to research the issue further and provide an update to the next meeting of this committee. **(AP2)**

12. NIPB GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY REGISTER

Members noted that because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been no opportunities for Board Members or staff to offer or receive gifts

or hospitality.

13. ARAC PROGRAMME OF WORK

The Director of Resources tabled a draft programme of work for the period September 2021 –June 2022. The Director of Resources noted this programme is based on the terms of reference for the committee which were also attached. Dates for the 2022 meetings would be confirmed in due course.

The Chief Executive noted that the attendance of the PSNI ARAC Chair should also be included at the relevant intervals on this programme of work. Director of Resources to update the programme accordingly. **(AP3)**

14. COMMUNICATION ISSUES/ OPPORTUNITIES

No communication issues were raised.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair and Vice-Chair noted this was the Chief Executive's last day in post and thanked her for all her support to Members during her time as Chief Executive and wished her every success for the future.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee would meet on Thursday 9 December 2021 at 2pm.

(Meeting closed at 15.55).

CORPORATE SERVICES

Date: September 2021

Chair