

CCEA

ARAC COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the fifty eighth Audit & Risk Assurance Committee meeting held on Thursday 19 January 2023 at 1.30 pm via Hybrid Arrangements.

Present :

Mr Rob Smyth (Chair)	Mr Tommy O'Reilly
Ms Majella Corrigan	Mrs Carol Fitzsimons
Mrs Donna O'Connor	Mrs Paula Leitch
Mr Tony Stevens	Mr Colin Coffey
Mr Nathan Wardlow (B/room Apprentice)	Mrs Leah Scott
Mr John Daly	Ms Amanda Swann
Mrs Corrine Latham	Mrs Sharon King
Mr Robert Clugston	Mr David Wilson
Ms Emma Patton (KPMG)	Mr Jason McCallion
Ms Finula McGowan (NIAO)	Mr Ray Caldwell (DE Observer)

Ms Jacqui Burns (Temporary Manager, Council Secretariat)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed Committee Members and Senior CCEA Staff to the meeting.

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from:

Apologies were received from Professor Philip Hanna.

2. Conflict of Interests

There were no conflicts of interest declared at this meeting.

3. Chairs Business

The Chair congratulated Mrs Corrine Latham on her recent appointment as the new Temporary Director of Curriculum and Assessment.

4. Ratification of Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 22 September 2022

It was agreed that the minutes provided were an accurate reflection of the previous meeting.

Proposer: Majella Corrigan

Seconder: Rob Smyth

5. Financial Risk Control and Assurance

Risk and Assurance in Awards and Purchases

AUD/58/1

The Chair invited the temporary Business Manager of Finance (TBMF) to present an update to the committee on 'Risk and Assurance in Awards and Purchases'. He informed the committee that this was a standard report that provided an overview of unauthorised purchases greater than £1,500 as well as 'Direct Award Contracts' from September to December 2022.

The TBMF reported three unauthorised purchases. These were all related to additional cleaning required due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were all purchased by one staff member. Financial services addressed the issue at the time, and the staff member was no longer working for CCEA.

There were also six direct award contracts which totalled £15,345.03 (exc. VAT).

Committee members received clarification on the detail of the information provided and were satisfied with explanations.

NIAO External Audit Strategy 2022/23

AUD/58/2

The Temporary Director of Finance and Corporate Services (TDoFCS) introduced Mr Jason McCallion to present an update to the committee in respect of the NIAO audit of the Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2023.

Mr McCallion outlined the purpose of the document and summarised the content for committee members.

A committee member asked if the CCEA are involved in the accounts for the Department of Education. It was confirmed that the CCEA's accounts are independent.

The committee spoke about the 'Report to those Charged with Governance' (RttCWG) and the laying of accounts in regards of the timetable. Ms Finula McGowan confirmed that the RttCWG did not form part of the laying of accounts.

Annual Report and Accounts 2022/2023 Production Plan

AUD/58/3

The Chair invited the TBMF to update the committee on the production of the 2022/2023 Annual Report and Accounts. He updated committee members on the deadlines provided by the Department of Education, although said that these were yet to be finalised. The paper provided a brief overview of the main stages and the anticipated timelines. A committee member enquired as to when the timetable would be received. The DoFCS confirmed that it had been received recently.

6. Corporate Risk Management and Audit

Corporate Risk Register – November 2022 Update

AUD/58/4

The TDoFCS presented this paper to committee members and provided a summary of the activity on the residual scores of the eight corporate risks since the previous review. He confirmed there were no changes made to any of the eight corporate risk scores.

A council member sought assurance on mitigations in place in relation to upcoming strike action in schools. The TDoE addressed this and explained that contingency measures were currently being put in place and provided detail on proposed measures.

A council member recognised that there remain some residual issues from the COVID pandemic and said that at some point these would no longer be required. The ICEO said that this was something to reflect upon when it is next reviewed.

A committee member observed that CR5 was broad in relation to spanning from Human Resources to Data Protection and Cyber Security. The ICEO explained that this was a highly regulated risk and that there were clear sets of guidance. She went further to explain that CCEA have in-house teams and standards to ensure that staff are trained on these issues. The ICEO also informed significant investment had been made to achieve the 'Cyber Essentials' certification. Ms Emma Patton (KPMG) also stated that KPMG as the internal audit provider, would also audit this risk.

A committee member observed that the score for CR6 had reduced, and asked if steps were required to improve the reputation of the organisation. The ICEO said that it was matter of priority for the Executive Teams and informed the committee of CCEA communications strategy which was being developed for summer 2023.

Internal Audit Activity: Internal Audit Reports and Schedule **AUD/58/5&6**

The Chair Invited Ms Emma Patton (KPMG) to present to the committee. Ms Patton sought approval to defer the planned review of Management of Contracted for Services following discussions with management. There were no objections and approval of this amendment was granted by committee members.

Proposer: Majella Corrigan
Seconder: Carol Fitzsimons

Ms Patton drew attention to recommendations in the Internal audit report on ICT Management and referred to recommendations which had been accepted by the management for implementation.

The Chair invited Ms Finula McGowan (NIAO) to provide a verbal update. Ms McGowan confirmed she had nothing to raise.

The Chair invited Mr Jason McCallion (ASM) to provide a verbal update. Mr McCallion confirmed he has nothing to raise.

The Chair invited Mr Ray Caldwell (DE) to provide a verbal update. Mr Caldwell confirmed he had nothing to raise.

Mid-Year Governance Statement **AUD/58/7**

The TDoFCS informed committee members that this had been included for information purposes and thanked them for remotely approving the return. He informed members that feedback had been received from the Department of Education and that a response was currently being drafted. He also informed that CCEA have received the commissioning letter from the Department for the full Governance Statement.

General Conditions of Recognition Statement of Annual Compliance **AUD/58/8**

The TDoFCS thanked members for remote approval and confirmed that the return had been completed via the portal provided.

7. Any Other Business

Revised CCEA Risk Management Policy

AUD/58/9

The TDoFCS informed committee members that the policy had been revised as part of a rolling review process and that the update addresses recommendations and feedback contained in an Internal Audit Report carried out in March 2021 and requested approval.

A committee member recommended that operational risk registers are shared with Committee. The BAM confirmed that it was not normal practise to present operational risks to council but would be drawn to the attention of the respective Director. . The committee member commented that the overall corporate risk register should reflect what the operational risks are.

The ICEO noted that Risk management arrangements were subject to internal audit and noted that operational risk management would normally be the responsibility of the CEO and the Executive team.

Ms Patton confirmed that internal audit had completed an audit in this area which was a satisfactory report. A committee member said that a discussion around risks and risk appetite in areas in the organisation including exams and curriculum would be beneficial for members of the ARAC to understand the risk environment in order to provide scrutiny in this area.

The chair asked the committee members for their approval of the updated policy.

Proposer: Majella Corrigan

Secunder: Paula Leitch

Date of Next Meeting

The Committee Chair thanked members for their attendance and confirmed that the date of the next meeting was 20 April 2023 at 1.30pm