

MINUTES

Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

Date: 18 June 2020

Venue: Virtual

Present: David Clarke (Chair)
James Norton (Member)
Dr Susan Tranter (Member)
Owen Vallis (Member)
Brian Tytherleigh (Member)

In attendance: Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner
Alice Miles, Director of Strategy and Policy
Haroon Chowdry, Director of Evidence
Janette Threapleton, Head of Business Services
Jenny Wilcocks, Head of Finance
Seb Groth, Engagement Director - NAO
Karen Murray, Partner – Mazars
Stuart Frith, Senior Manager – Mazars
Chris Rising, Internal Audit Director – Macintyre Hudson
Andrew Senior, DfE Sponsor Team
Tammy Manhire, DfE Sponsor Team

Board

Secretariat: Karen Bryant

Simone Vibert, Senior Public Affairs and Policy Analyst observer to the meeting

Summary of discussion	
1.	Welcome and Introductions
	The Chair welcomed members and attendees.
2.	Declaration of Interests
	No new additions
3.	Draft Minutes of 20 May 2020, Summary of Actions and Matters Arising
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 th May 2020, were approved. Action: None

	<p>Action Log All actions to date are now complete.</p> <p>Matters Arising Members registered concern about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the timeline to appoint the new Commissioner. The Commissioner informed the Committee that DfE has confirmed that they will advertise the Children's Commissioner post at the end of July for two months.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Children's Commissioner's Report</p>
	<p>The Commissioner informed the Committee that significant attention and resource has been devoted to responsive work monitoring and influencing the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable children's lives. Business plan priorities continue to be delivered within the new context. The business plan for the remainder of the year is being reviewed in response to Covid-19 and planned activities are being rescheduled.</p> <p>Members discussed children's potential loss of learning as a result of the disruption to their schooling. The team have submitted a data request to the Department and help is requested from the sponsor team in progressing the request.</p> <p>Action: TM to facilitate the data requests for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Daily school attendance data, at the school level; and ii) Data from the DfE vulnerable children and young people Local Authority Covid-19 survey.
<p>5.</p>	<p>Chair's Annual Report</p>
	<p>The Chair presented his draft annual report, highlighting sustained improvements by the Office in the areas governance, procurement and financial controls. The Chair noted that completed internal audit assignments provided substantial assurance.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the office is working to the same standard even under Covid-19 conditions and reiterated concerns about risk to succession due to the limited timeframe for the recruitment of a new Children's Commissioner.</p> <p>Actions: Chair to finalise the report and share with Members and the Commissioner.</p> <p>TM to provide written assurance of alternative DfE succession plans should a new Commissioner not be in post and able to start on 1st March 2021.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>NAO Audit Completion Report</p>
	<p>Karen Murray presented the NAO Audit Completion Report, she noted that the accounts had been produced to a high standard and presented a very positive picture. There are no control weaknesses and the Office was commended for its outstanding work and management.</p> <p>Action: NAO will be recommending an unqualified audit opinion for the 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General.</p>

7.	Approval of draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20
	<p>The 2019-20 draft Annual Report and Accounts was reviewed and approved.</p> <p>Actions: KB to finalise draft.</p>
8.	Risk Management and Assurance Framework Q4 review
	<p>Janette Threapleton outlined updates to the Assurance Framework and Strategic Risk Register, confirming that all risks have been reviewed in response to Covid-19 and homeworking.</p> <p>Members felt that the risk associated with the contracted timeline for appointing a new Commissioner was high and that this should be reflected in the Risk Register.</p> <p>Action: JT 'Succession Planning' risk rating to be increased to high.</p>
9.	Budget and Management Accounts update Fraud Annual Action Plan Q4 review
	<p>The management accounts and fraud action plan were reviewed.</p> <p>The Office has a reduced budget this year with most of the annual budget being committed to staffing and overhead.</p> <p>Action: None</p>
10.	Internal Audit Strategy – June 2020 (draft)
	<p>Members discussed the draft 2018-22 Internal Audit Strategy and the proposed areas of coverage in 2020-21. It was agreed that the IA on preparedness for handover to the next Commissioner should be brought forward to allow for any recommendations from the audit to be implemented.</p> <p>Action: CR to provide a final copy of the Strategy.</p>
11.	AOB
	<p>NAO Value for Money report – no changes reported</p> <p>Action: SG to provide a copy of the report.</p>

Future meeting dates

- Wednesday 23 September 2020
- Wednesday 25 November 2020
- Wednesday 24 February 2021
- Wednesday 19 May 2021
- Wednesday 23 June 2021 (Remuneration Committee)
- Wednesday 22 September 2021

