

MINUTES

Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 22 September 2021

Venue: Virtual

Present: James Norton (Member – Chairing this meeting)
Harry Buscall (Member)
Micon Metcalfe (Member)
Richard Smith (Member)

In attendance: Rachel de Souza, Children’s Commissioner
Janette Threapleton, Director of Business Services
Seb Groth, Engagement Director – NAO
Chris Rising, Head of Internal Audit – Macintyre Hudson
Sarah Jennings – Deputy Director, OCC Sponsorship Team, DfE
Nasim Clark – Team Leader, OCC Sponsorship Team, DfE

Apologies: David Clarke (Chair)
George Stylianides (Member)

Board Secretariat: Mubanga Mwelwa

Summary of Discussion	
1.	Welcome and Introductions
	James Norton opened the meeting by explaining that he would be chairing the meeting on behalf of David Clarke. The Chair proceeded to welcome members and attendees to the meeting. Apologies have been received from David Clarke and George Stylianides.
2.	Declaration of Interests
	No new interests were declared.
3.	Draft Minutes of 23 June 2021, Summary of Actions and Matters Arising
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021 were approved. Action Log: Action 11 has been deferred to the November meeting. Matters Arising: None Actions: None

4.	<p>Children's Commissioner's Report</p>
	<p>The Commissioner opened her remarks by reporting on the office's biggest activity of the last six months - the Big Ask.</p> <p>The team have worked very hard to deliver on the Big Ask and to ensure its most important messages were shared and understood by Government departments.</p> <p>The Commissioner highlighted that the poverty and disadvantage papers for example were key messages with No.10 and to the Department for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>The Commissioner reported that the Big Ask received 557,000 children's responses which makes it the largest survey of children in England. The Commissioner took the opportunity to thank colleagues and the Department of Education who helped to deliver the Big Ask.</p> <p>The Commissioner went on to update members on the other work undertaken recently including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Gender Equalities Advisory Council at this year's G7 summit, where we have helped to shape a series of recommendations for Ministers. • the Department of Education on the review of support for children with Special Educational Needs. • a request from the Cabinet Office to explore what further support can be offered to families who might be struggling as recommended in the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities Review report published in April 2021. <p>Actions: None</p>
5.	<p>The Big Ask – Initial Briefing</p>
	<p>The Commissioner launched the results of the Big Ask on 21/09/2021. The survey covered 151 local authorities and received responses from some of England's most vulnerable communities, including Gypsy Roma children, children in care, and vulnerable children.</p> <p>The approach of the Big Ask was to capture the 'voices' of children across the nation. The Commissioner wanted to hear about what matters most to children especially after the Covid19 lockdowns.</p> <p>The results of the Big Ask revealed that children were consistent in their responses despite their backgrounds, and they wanted the same things. For example, children wanted to be outdoors, play with their friends and they wanted a greener and fairer world with good opportunities.</p> <p>The key concerns for children coming out of the lockdown were mental health and wellbeing, community spaces and having places to go to and life in school.</p> <p>Children are worried about failing exams and not getting the future they desire.</p> <p>It was also noted that money was a worry especially for vulnerable children.</p> <p>Members commended the Commissioner on a very impressive report and observed that the style of writing was relatable to all members of society.</p> <p>Actions: None</p>

<p>6.</p>	<p>External Audit (NAO) i) External Audit Plan 2021-22 (verbal) ii) OCC Value for Money Update (September)</p>
	<p>Seb Groth reported a change in delivery partner for the 2021-22 annual audit from Mazars to EY and confirmed that he will shortly be arranging introductory meetings to the new delivery partner and manager.</p> <p>Members noted that we are mid-point in the financial year and queried whether the change in delivery partner would impact on OCC's budgeted audit fee.</p> <p>Seb Groth indicated that the audit fee may change and that he would seek to establish a fair and appropriate fee given the size of the office and the quality of the engagement and support provided by the office.</p> <p>The Value for Money update was taken as read.</p> <p>Actions: Seb Groth to provide the Audit Planning Report 2021-22 for the next meeting.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Internal Audit, Audit Assignment Update i) Help at Hand (HAH) Final Report</p>
	<p>Chris Rising reported on the Internal Audit Assignment - Help at Hand (HAH).</p> <p>The delivery of the HAH audit concluded that there were substantial assurances over the effectiveness of controls in place to manage risks for this area.</p> <p>There were no areas of significant weaknesses that were identified and only two low priority recommendations were made and agreed as part of the review.</p> <p>Chris Rising thanked the Children's Commissioner's Office for their cooperation during the audit process.</p> <p>Actions: None</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Risk Management and Assurance Framework Q1 Review i) Risk Register (September 2021) ii) Assurance Framework Q1 (April-June 2021) Review</p>
	<p>Janette Threapleton presented the current risk management profile and highlighted the changes to the register since the members' last review in June.</p> <p>Members noted that the last internal audit of safeguarding took place in 2018. Janette Threapleton confirmed that as part of the internal audit strategy a safeguarding review would take place in 2022-23.</p> <p>Actions: Members to agree the next three risks to be reviewed in detail. Janette Threapleton to contact George Stylianides to progress this.</p>

<p>9.</p>	<p>Budget and Management Accounts Update i) Management Accounts (August 2021) ii) Counter Fraud Annual Action Plan – Q1-Q2 Review</p>
	<p>Janette Threapleton presented the update for the Management Accounts (August 2021). At the end of month 5 nearly £1million of the Commissioner's £2.6m budget has been spent.</p> <p>Actions: None</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>AOB i) OCC's Audit Completion Report 2020-21 (final) ii) Chair's Annual Report 2020-21 (final) iii) Policies, procedures, and processes reviews iv) TIAA Data Protection Alert (July 2021) v) TIAA Data Protection Alert (August 2021)</p>
	<p>Janette Threapleton gave an update under AOB and stated that the papers had been shared for information.</p> <p>She drew members attention to the TIAA Data Protection Alert (August 2021), provided by the OCC's data protection officer, and which referenced newly approved certification schemes.</p> <p>In the main these are not felt to be relevant to the Office, however OCC does plan to explore further the 'Age Appropriate Design Certification Scheme'.</p> <p>Actions: None</p>
<p>Future meeting dates</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 24 November 2021 • Wednesday 23 February 2022 • Wednesday 18 May 2022 – TBC • Wednesday 22 June 2022