

Date:	16 November 2022	A(i)
Item:	22/036	

MINUTES
Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 16 November 2022

Venue: Department for Education - Sanctuary Buildings

Present: Sue Baldwin - Chair
Harry Buscall - Member
Micon Metcalfe - Member
James Norton - Member
Richard Smith - Member
George Stylianides - Member
Diana Melville - Member

Attending: Rachel de Souza - Children's Commissioner, CCo (agenda item 22/041)
Eleanor Lyons - Deputy to the Children's Commissioner (full meeting)
Juliette Cammaerts - Director of Policy, Planning and Delivery (agenda item 22/041)
Jenny Wilcocks - Head of Finance
Ashleigh Thorius - Audit Manager, NAO
Hayley Clark - Associate Partner, EY (dial in)
Chris Rising - Head of Internal Audit, Macintyre Hudson
Nasim Clark - Team Leader OCC Sponsorship Team, DfE (dial in)

Apologies: Paul Hewitt - Member
Janette Threapleton - Director of Corporate Services, CCo
Elaine Manak - Engagement Director, NAO
Simon Luk - Assistant Manager, EY

Board

Secretariat: Mubanga Mwelwa - Corporate Services Advisor (Governance & Commercial), CCo

Item No.	Summary of Discussion
22/033	Welcome and Introductions
	<p>The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted.</p> <p>The Chair stated that this was her first meeting as Chair following the departure of the previous Chair, who was in post for seven years and whose commitment to the role was commended.</p> <p>Members and other attendees introduced themselves to new members by name and briefly explained their respective roles and backgrounds.</p>
22/034	Declaration of Interests
	No new interests were declared.
22/035	Draft Minutes of 21 September 2022, Summary of Actions and Matters Arising (Attachment A)
	<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 were approved.</p> <p>Action Log: All previous actions are now complete.</p> <p>Actions: 22/017 External Audit - Audit and Risk Committee effectiveness tool. The Chair will pick this up with the executive team to discuss when and how it will be carried out- SB</p> <p>Matters Arising: None</p>
22/036	Children's Commissioner's Report
	<p>Commissioner's Report:</p> <p>The Deputy Commissioner reported on the great work that the Commissioner has been doing since the last update in September on the seven priority areas highlighted in the Commissioner's Strategy and Business Plan.</p> <p>Members asked if the CCo was looking into the challenges surrounding asylum seeking children. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the team were looking into this issue and had visited accommodation where children asylum seekers were staying. She reported that</p>

	<p>this issue wouldn't form part of the family review work but would be reviewed separately.</p> <p>On SEND, members observed the extensive reviews undertaken but noted that progress in this area is slow and some Local Authorities are unable to meet their statutory duties.</p> <p>In reference to the potential legal challenge brought against DfE over its handling of pupils' personal data, members advised that the CCo be mindful of its own processes and procedures in managing and sharing data and think about how this risk is managed. The CCo reported that it is doing work on data sharing and how data is collected.</p> <p>The Chair commended the Commissioner and her team for all the work that they are doing, and she noted that she was enthused by the length and breadth of work that is undertaken.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with members on actions that result from deliberations relating to the online safety bill - EL • As part of the risk register refresh exercise, data management/sharing should be noted for consideration – MM
22/037	<p>External Audit - NAO/EY</p>
	<p><i>CCo External Audit Timetable 2022-23</i></p> <p>EY presented their Financial Audit timetable for 2022/23, comprising of a planning visit in January for three weeks, an interim visit commencing in February to March for three weeks, with certification planned for July 2023.</p> <p><i>CCo Value for Money Update (November)</i></p> <p>Members asked about the impact of limited resources being experienced on audits. EY noted the concern and reported that as a firm they are trying to put processes in place to limit this impact such as working on recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Members enquired whether some of the NAO reports fed into the work done at the CCo. It was reported that the CCo and NAO sometimes work together to contribute to reports that are published, or CCo will respond to reports if there is an impact to be made, e.g., the CCo fed into a published report on vulnerable adolescents.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair would like to discuss the Audit timeline and ensure she is available if needed - SB/EM

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NAO to give the Commissioner a forward look on topics that would be of interest – AT
22/038	<p>Internal Audit, Audit Assignment Update:</p> <p><i>Progress Report</i></p> <p>The Internal Audit Progress report set out the timeframes for the delivery of the 2022/23 plan and the results of audits delivered to date.</p> <p>It was reported that the Audit & Risk Committee can take substantial assurance over the effectiveness of controls in place with no areas of significant weakness identified on the final internal audit reports on Safeguarding and Governance & Leadership.</p> <p><i>Safeguarding Audit Report (final)</i></p> <p>The key finding of training not being adequately recorded was rated as low in the report. However, members agreed that this key finding should have been higher to reflect its importance.</p> <p>Members queried whether the recommendation about monitoring training in spreadsheets would create more work and recommended that the team investigate ways for the information to be monitored. It was reported that the safeguarding team had already implemented the tracking of training.</p> <p><i>Governance and Leadership questions (final)</i></p> <p>Members asked how the Internal Auditors pull together Governance across the audits given that it is a broad topic. The Internal Auditors stated that they try and consider elements of Governance where it applies in every audit and in turn try and pull it together in the Annual Audit Opinion prepared at the end of the reporting year.</p> <p>With regards to the skills matrix members enquired how assured is the CCo that they are employing the right people at the right level. Based on the audit the Internal Auditors had observed that the CCo had the right processes in place to match the right people and the right resilience to manage the loss of these skills should they arise. It was further added the Commissioner can take assurance that the right processes are in place.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep ARC updated on progress being made on the skills matrix which is due in March 2023 - MM/JW

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCo and Internal Auditors to discuss timing and planning for the remaining two audits on project management and financial planning/budgetary control - JW/CR • Internal Audit to take account of the presentation on the Project Grid in their forthcoming review of project management- CR
22/039	<p>Risk Management and Assurance Framework Q1 Review</p> <p>i). Risk Register (November 2022)</p> <p>ii). Assurance Framework Q2 Review (Jul - Sept 2022)</p>
	<p>Members were advised that there had been no changes to the risk profiles since the Committee’s last review in September 2022.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the CCo is due to undertake a risk refresh and asked how members would prefer to provide input/feedback. The following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange a workshop with members and/or communicate via email • One of the members has a particular interest and expertise in ‘risk’ and would be happy to support the exercise • Due to the current economic downturn, there is pressure on budgets, which may lead to a lot of questions about agility • The committee will need to review risk profiles and showcase them • Direct work around risk and the assurances in place to manage these risks <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a risk refresh and agree on timing – JW/MM • Note that the upcoming Internal Audit on Project Management needs to help inform the efficacy of the risk management refresh - MM
22/040	<p>Budget & Management Accounts Update: JW</p>
	<p><i>Management Accounts (October 2022)</i></p> <p>The Head of Finance reported that at the end of P7 (October 2022) the CCo had spent 54% of its total budget, including nearly all of the additional funding from DLUHC for the Family Review. Subsequently the CCo is on track to fully spend by the end of the year. Minimal contingency pots of £4k admin and £12k programme remain, although the latter may be partly needed to fund a large amount of project travel foreseen over the next few months. Utility bills remain an unknown quantity and it is therefore not recommended to seek to allocate these small contingency funds unless necessary, and</p>

	<p>any spend, including minor staffing changes, would need to be given budgetary approval in advance.</p> <p>Other costs to note are that GPA and the External Auditors fees have risen significantly.</p> <p>The Head of Finance reported that she has been speaking with the DfE Sponsor Team about future budgets and that a business case has been made regarding a 3-year budget forecast. DfE have acknowledged that the increasing costs are out of the CCo's control and therefore will be discussing these constraints in the business planning process. At this stage DfE cannot commit to a 3- year budget but they can give an indication of a baseline budget over the next 3 years.</p> <p>The Chair noted that it is better to spend the budget within reason as any excess would not be carried forward.</p> <p>Members commended the Head of Finance on her robust knowledge of the budget and added that she and her Corporate Services Advisor - Finance were doing a great job.</p> <p>Members advised the CCo that money is limited so resources should be spent wisely for the remainder of the financial year.</p> <p><i>Counter Fraud Strategy and Counter Fraud Annual Action Plan Q1/Q2</i> The Counter Fraud Strategy and Action Plan were shared for information.</p> <p>Actions: None</p>
22/041	<p>Project Grid:</p>
	<p><i>Project Grid</i></p> <p>At the June 2022 Committee meeting, members requested further information on how project delivery and risk are monitored and reviewed by the Senior Management Team (SMT).</p> <p>The Director of Policy, Planning and Delivery reported that the CCo define projects across the office as any series of tasks that need to be completed to reach a specific outcome.</p>

The outputs of which can range from blogs or online content produced by individuals or a team, to large office-wide projects which require high levels of resource.

These are all recorded and tracked in the CCo's project grid which is owned by the Commissioner's Private Office team. Each project, regardless of size or phase, is assigned to a member of SLT and SMT responsible for its delivery. All projects have their own project grid proportionate to their size, including timeline, key milestones and outputs, and an issues log for escalating decisions or to flag concerns that require SMT input.

SMT meet monthly to review progress against timelines, coordinate resourcing, and to discuss and agree future projects, including reactive work.

At the end of each quarter, a summary report is produced on progress against the business plan which forms the basis of an SMT review.

The CCo has an assigned Prince2-trained project support to oversee the project management structure.

Members commended the team on their sound oversight of project management. Members also advised that the team be mindful of not stretching themselves and where possible if being requested to do work should ask for finance and resourcing support.

Help at Hand (HAH) Review to include mitigation of potential reputational risks associated with the HAH service

The HAH review highlighted how impactful the amount of work the service delivers with a team of 3.3 FTE.

It was reported that the responsibility and risk does not sit within the service, instead the HAH service informs the wider work of the CCo.

The HAH report highlights that the service cannot do more unless it has more resource. Members wanted to pass on their huge commendation to the 3.3 people that diligently run the HAH service.

	<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When undertaking the risk refresh, connect the project grid to the risk approach – MM/JW
22/042	<p>Any Other Business:</p>
	<p>Policies and Procedures; sets out the latest reviews and updates to the organisation's policies and procedures and was provided for information.</p> <p>TIAA Data Protection Alert on 'worker sues hospital over data breach' and 'UK government calls for information on computer misuse' was shared for information.</p> <p>No further comment.</p> <p>Actions: None</p>
<p>Future meeting dates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wednesday 21 September 2022 Wednesday 16 November 2022 Wednesday 08 February 2023 Wednesday 17 May 2023 Wednesday 21 June 2023 <p>Wednesday 21 June 2023 – Remuneration Committee</p>	