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Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
Draft Minutes
Wednesday 25th January 2023
Via Zoom

Present

Gerry Guckian, Chair, Northern Ireland Social Care Council Board Member
Jacqui McGarvey, Northern Ireland Social Care Council Board Member

In Attendance

Declan McAllister, Director of Registration and Corporate Services
Patricia Higgins, Chief Executive
Lorraine Conlon, Department of Health
Catherine McKeown, BSO Internal Audit
Stephen Knox, NIAO
Ian Kelsall, Deloitte
Zyrus Johan Bati, Deloitte
Hollie Bishop, Secretariat

Observer

Andre McKeown, Evaluations Manager

Apologies

Sandra Stranaghan, Head of Business Services
Marian O'Rourke, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Item	Agenda	Action
Formalities		
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the above apologies.	
1.2	The Chair welcomed Ian Kelsall and Zyrus Bati to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as the new representatives from Deloitte. The Chair regrettably informed members of the sudden passing of Dawn Johnston, who had served as an Auditor on behalf of Deloitte over the last year. He asked that Ian and Zyrus pass on the condolences and appreciation of Audit members, as	

	<p>well as the wider Social Care Council, to Deloitte and the family of Dawn, emphasising the incredibly professional work and commitment she displayed throughout her time with the committee.</p> <p>ACTION: Secretariat to send a sympathy card to Deloitte and Dawn's family on behalf of committee members and the Social Care Council.</p>	Secretariat
2.	Conflicts of Interest	
2.1	No conflicts of interest were declared.	
3.	Chairs Business	
3.1	The Chair advised that both Board Member's Brenda Maitland and Lee Wilson have now concluded their term with the Social Care Council. This leaves only The Chair, Gerry Guckian and Jacqui McGarvey as the remaining representation of the Board on the committee. The Chair reported that quorum has been satisfied for today's meeting as per the Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Members agreed to proceed with the meeting in light of the agenda content, noting that no decision making will take place. The Chair advised that a co-option will be in place by the next Audit Committee meeting in May once the Board have confirmed an individual with financial expertise.	
3.2	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services informed members that the Board Skills Audit is now with the Chief Social Worker for review and recruitment for the vacant Board positions should commence in the coming months. However, in light of the Board Skills Audit, the Board had agreed to co-opt a representative with financial experience to address the skills gap should the Audit Committee and Board be left without a financial expert for a period of time.	
4.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 5th October 2022 and Extraordinary meeting on 11th October 2022	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting from 6 th October 2022 and the extraordinary meeting on the 11 th October 2022 were agreed as true and accurate.	
5.	Matters Arising	
5.1	<p>The Chair recalled that either himself or another Board member had suggested that the cost of living crisis should be marked on the horizon scanning for continued discussion and review. Upon review this has not been reflected in the risk documentation for today's meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: Cost of living crisis to be added to the horizon scanning document.</p>	Sandra Stranaghan

Internal Audit		
6.0	<u>Internal Audit Progress Report – Paper C</u>	
6.1	<p>BSO Internal Auditor, Catherine McKeown provided an oversight of the Internal Audit Progress Report with the following highlights;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No audit summaries for presentation to the Audit Committee today - Three assignments that have yet to be completed are ongoing and will be completed by the end of February. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Performance Management o Complaints Management o Information Governance 	
6.2	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services advised members that discussions are underway for the new internal audit 3-year plan. He advised that he will be meeting with Catherine McKeown and Patricia Higgins to prepare the new audit plan for presentation at the next Audit Committee meeting in May.	
7.0	Shared Services Update	
7.1	The Internal Auditor, Catherine McKeown provided a verbal update on shared services advising members that there are two shared services underway within BSO at present; these are the Recruitment and Payroll Shared Services Centre.	
8.0	Progress on Audit Recommendations	
8.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services provided an overview of the Progress on Audit Recommendations with the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of recommendations outstanding, a lot which were either implemented or in progress over summer. - Recruitment Shared Services is now on the risk register as a high-level risk, as such the Committee will have particular interest in the BSO Shared services report once completed. - Of the outstanding recommendations from the internal audit report presented to the committee in October 2022 two have been fully implemented and ten have been partially implemented. They are also RAG rated within the report, at present four have been rated at amber. - Several of the key recommendations have the potential to be stood down, for example the Board Audit Skills report has been carried out and now anticipate this can be closed once the DoH and PAU can appoint from here. - The development of a Service User and Carer Participation and Engagement strategy is sitting as amber. The 	

	<p>Participation Partnership have integrated this into their plan of work for the year 2023/24 under the leadership of Sarah Browne.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of an action plan in response to the DOH Learning and Improvement Strategy which the Workforce Development team are focused on addressing. - Review of practice documentation and data flow mapping linked to the ICT internal audit conducted approximately 18 months ago. Engagement with a number of suppliers has taken place with further review to be taken with regard to how surveys are conducted. - A number of outstanding ICT recommendations are linked to ITS and the work they conduct for entire HSC such as password management – The Social Care Council are working closely with ITS to review if there will be a solution to manage passwords for all HSC staff. 	
8.2	<p>The Chair shared concerns of the RAG rating system, if the original implementation date for a recommendation was listed as 2019 and a revised date of 2023 is introduced how can a green rating be justified. The Director of Registration and Corporate Services advised the Chair that with regards to the recommendations relating to the decommissioning of the Socrates infrastructure a revised implementation date and green rating is justified due to the lack of control the Council has had. A large portion of this recommendation has sat outside of the Social Care Council's control; however, the upgrade is now due to go ahead at the end of February when the decommission can be finalised and the recommendation completed. The Chair suggested that the RAG rating should be based on a definitive end date to prevent the Audit Committee from appearing accepting of delays. The Chair suggested that while the slippage has been fairly outlined, it may be more perceptive to have these recommendations positioned at amber.</p>	
8.3	<p>Discussion took place on the RAG rating system for outstanding recommendations moving forward.</p>	
9.0	<u>James House Progress Update – Paper F</u>	
9.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services provided an overview of the James House Progress Update with the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timeline for transition; in the process of moving and a process is in place for management of disposals, transitions and removals. Anticipating that everything will be in situation by 6th February 2023 for an all staff event in the new premises. - Board members will have security passes and be able to access the office and utilise meeting rooms as required. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The building will be fully secured and no visitors will be able to access the premises without a member of staff escorting them. - There will be a saving of £318k per annum with the transfer from private leasing to civil service DoH funded premises. Those savings will assist with what is likely to be a very difficult financial year next year. Working with the DoH at present to look for a 3-5% return this year. - Hopes that non-recurring funding will become recurring for the following financial year, particularly with regards to the Adult Social Care Reform work ongoing to assist with resources and management in providing support to the Department. 	
9.2	Discussions took place regarding circulating information of the move and change of address to stakeholders and registrants.	
9.3	Members extended gratitude to Michaela Murray for her work and comprehensive explanations to the Audit Committee regarding the James House licence and transition.	
10.	<u><i>Risk Progress Report</i></u>	
10.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services provided an update on the Risk Progress Report with the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultation for the Corporate Strategy is about to begin. Four years ago, the entire board were brought together to review the risks for the coming term. The Council would be looking to schedule a similar meeting this time around to establish the strategic risks for the next period. - It is imperative that due consideration is given to all identified strategic risks to ensure they are within the control of the Social Care Council as some of the current risks are not within the remit of council staff. The Chair recommended that the perhaps some of these system risks that are outside of the power of the Council are included instead in the horizon scanning. - The Chair agreed it would be sensible to review the number of risks carried by the social care council and the remit of the staff to complete those. - There has been a continued impact of Covid on staff absence and delivery of business. This will be reviewed at the May Audit Committee meeting however as there is a continuing increased level of impact the risk should remain at a medium risk level. The Chair agreed this is sensible, particularly as there is limited understanding of the long-term effects or impact of Covid. Members agreed that the risk might be better adapted to more broadly encompass absence and long-term effects at the next review. - Currently there are 19 strategic risks on the register. 	

- 5 risks assessed as high
 - 11 risks assessed as medium
 - 3 risks assessed as low
- 29 operational risks that operate across the key functions.
 - Majority of these have been mitigated down to lower level assessments with zero assessed as a high level risk.
- Strategic risks assessed as high level:
- Fitness to practise REG01
 - A newly appointed FTP manager is now in place and a replacement to backfill the Fitness to Practice officer vacancy is underway although an agency member of staff is currently covering this ahead of a formal recruitment process.
- A directive from the Department of Health will see all agency staff consolidated onto temporary or permanent contracts to reduce costs.
- Development of Social Care Policy and Resourcing of the Social care Workforce WFD01:
 - High level risk.
 - This strategic risk, although critical to the overall development of the social care workforce, is out with the control of the Social Care Council for the most part.
 - Perhaps more of a Departmental risk, however the Social Care Council continues to influence development through other projects
- Resourcing of the Workforce Development Team WFD06:
 - High Risk
 - Additional tea, resources supporting the Adult Social Care Reform work are on a non-recurrent funding basis. This remains a risk until more sustainable funding can be achieved.
- Recruitment COR24:
 - High Risk
 - Ongoing engagement with BSO regarding difficulties faced with recruitment and shared services in particular with the process for recruitment
 - Shared Services report will be completed and shared soon
 - Market for recruitment is increasingly difficult, particularly with recruiting staff for the correct positions.
- Escalation of finance risk
 - Increased to high risk
 - £130k overspend at end of December 2022.
 - Meeting with DoH colleagues on 26th January. They are holding a sum of £180k funding on behalf of SCC which will only be released if required to breakeven at the end of the year. The impact of James House

	<p>delay has been reduced significantly since June and the Council are projected to breakeven in light of this funding promised for release by DoH. Only £100k should need released for breakeven which would see a return of £80k to the DoH.</p>	
10.2	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services responded to a Board member, advising that training for Fitness to Practice officer training involves an induction programme for newly appointed staff, however staff generally are required to have very specific and specialised skills to make the shortlisting. The Social Care Council use Bon Salon for training. The Chief Executive advised that for each individual the procedure training varies, however there is an expectation that the 6-month probation would see newly appointed officers build confidence and capability.</p>	
10.3	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services informed members that DLS are going through a transformation of services and will be collaborating with the Social Care Council directly to implement the systems and procedures. It is hoped this may increase efficiency through shared platforms.</p>	
10.4	<p><u>Maintaining Registration STN02</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is now a notable period of improvement and stabilisation with registration. ○ An internal appointment has now been successful in obtaining the position of Deputy Registration Manager. ○ Recruitment exercise to backfill this post has now begun. ○ The risk remains high to maintain scrutiny while the action plan arising from the SoS Medical review is implemented. 	
10.5	<p><u>Other outstanding risks include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resourcing of communications function COM03 – Staff continue to work with the resources available to provide at present however working to secure greater resourcing moving forward. - Increasing membership for the Participation Partnership with Sarah Browne as the new Chair who is working to develop engagement plan for the coming year. - Promoting Systems Leadership SYS02 - a Rapid Action workshop was held in collaboration with NICON on 9th January. 	
10.6	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services providing an overview of the Horizon Scanning document with the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were a number of changes identified including financial pressure and the ongoing consultation of corporate strategy. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The following wording was proposed to include the Cost of Living Crisis on the Horizon Scanning: <i>The financial pressures faced by communities including increasing fuel costs may impact on how people are living their lives. Poverty and other social concerns which may impact directly on the Social Care Workforce and the demands for their services.</i> 	
10.7	The Chair reported that the proposed wording is appropriate, as long as it is represented in the Horizon Scanning document to acknowledge the field of vision.	
10.8	Northern Ireland Audit representative Stephen Knox queried if the additional rent cost for Millennium House was offset by registrant income does this mean there was an increase in registrants? The Director of Registration and Corporate Services advised that this is not factually correct given that there was a surplus of 50,000 registrants at the peak of Covid. After the mass removal control in July the figures dropped to 43,000 and has been slowly increasing over the last three months.	
Business Matters		
11.	Risk Management Committee Minutes – Paper G	
11.1	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services asked members if there were any queries regarding the Risk Management Committee minutes. No questions were noted.	
11.2	Members agreed it is useful to have the oversight of discussions undertaken by Risk Management Committee members and indeed good practice for ARAC.	
11.3	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services responded to member queries regarding a resolution of the HRPTs annual leave issue noted in the Risk Management Committee minutes at 4.10. He advised that the HR manager has indicated that this issue is ongoing and system wide however it is hoped this will be resolved soon.	
Governance		
12.	<u>Procurement Assurance Report</u>	
12.1	<p>The Director of Registration and Corporate Services provided an overview of the procurement assurance report with the following key points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The table at 3.2 shows the trends of expenditure. Not surprising there is a large spend around March when slippage monies become available. - Centre procurement excellence covers the Social Care Council around assurance with procurement and efficiency savings with purchases orders being created in an average 3.93 days. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.3 shows the financial savings of £6,500 last year and a savings of £1962 already to date in the business year April 2022 – September 2022. - The Social Care Council is no longer being covered by H&J Martin for property services and maintenance, this is now included in the property payments at James House and will be managed by the civil service. This results in a significant saving. - A number of DAC's have been awarded. The three DACs outlined have been awarded as no other supplier could provide the software as it is owned wholly by Silverbear and Ernst and Young. - Two systems are under development at the moment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Electronic Case Management System for FTP and Committee o App Development <p>Work is underway for the development of both of these with funding approved.</p> 	
12.2	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services advised that the Direct Award Contracts will run on into the next financial year when they will be presented for approval again.	
12.3	The Director of Registration and Corporate Services informed members that the savings for each month in the financial year 2021/22 as listed are calculated by PaLS by dividing the total savings by 12. It does not necessarily mean that amount was saved each month. He reported that the savings for this year is lower given the rising costs of supplies and resources.	
Closing Formalities		
12.	Any Other Business	
12.1	No other business	
13.	Date of Next Meeting	
13.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 10th May 2023 at 10:30am 	