



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Meeting of Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 23 February 2021

Venue: by Zoom

Attendance:

Committee	Moling Ryan (Chair), Ronan Nolan, Melanie Pine
Secretary	Clare Kelly
Executive	Helen Hall (Chief Executive), Margaret Tumelty, Claire McElroy, Anne Keeley – for items 1.5 and 1.6, Cormac Keating – for items 1.5 and 1.6
Visitors	Vincent Tao, Partner, Crowleys DFK (Internal Audit Provider) - for item 1.4(i) and 1.5

1. Agenda

The following matters were considered and discussed as set out on the agenda:

1.1 Closed Session – Committee members only

1.2 Chair's opening remarks

- I. Draft Agenda
- II. Minutes and matters arising
- III. Correspondence
- IV. Chief Executive's Update
- V. Training requirements

1.3 Risk

- I. Risk Management Report
- II. Draft Risk Register

1.4 Governance

- I. Authority Assessment
- II. Draft Annual Report of the Audit Committee for 2020
- III. Draft Chairpersons Statement of Internal Control (for inclusion in Policing Authority Annual Report)

1.5 Audit

- I. Draft Internal Audit Report on Internal Controls for 2020
- II. Internal Auditors Annual Report to the Audit and Risk Committee for 2020
- III. Internal Audit Work Plan 2021
- IV. Draft Appropriation Account 2020

1.6 Finance

- I. Financial Report

1.7 Other Business

2. Closed Session – Committee members only

3. Chair's Opening Remarks

The agenda was approved. The draft minutes of the Committee meeting on 10 December 2020 were approved and cleared for publication.

The Chief Executive provided an update to the Committee on recent issues and events, including the Business Plan 2021, the Policing Plan 2021, the nomination of four new Authority members and the proposed approach for training of Authority members and Committee members.

4. Risk

The Committee noted the Risk Management Report for February. The Risk Register was reviewed. It was agreed that the risk register would be updated to reflect the issue of social media.

5. Governance

The Internal Audit Provider presented the draft report of the Independent Authority Assessment. The draft report was discussed and the Committee shared their views in relation to the format and contents of the report. They noted that the report reflected a very positive endorsement of the Authority but asked whether more challenges could be offered to the Authority in addition to the inclusion of a level of detail that would enable a comparative analysis to be made with future assessments. It was agreed that the Internal Audit Provider would engage with the Executive, update the report and provide a revised report for consideration by the Authority.

The Committee reviewed the draft Annual Report of the Committee for 2020. The Committee approved the report, subject to receipt of the letters of assurance from the relevant organisations. The draft Report will be submitted to the Authority.

The Committee reviewed the draft Chairperson's Statement of Internal Control (SIC) to be included in the Authority's Annual Report 2020. Members were satisfied that the system of internal control, as set out in the SIC, operated effectively during 2020 and gives early warning of internal control failures and emerging risks. The Statement was agreed by the Committee.

6. Audit

The Internal Audit Provider presented the draft audit report in relation to the Internal Controls Review. The Committee discussed the findings and recommendations of the audit with the auditor, noting the auditors' conclusion that significant assurance can be placed on the sufficiency and operation of internal controls to mitigate and manage key inherent risks. A small number of low and medium ranked recommendations were noted, which management have agreed to implement as set out in the management comments of the report and the Committee approved the report. In particular, the following matters were noted and welcomed by the Committee:

- The review had focussed in particular on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the control environment and found that in most cases controls had continued to hold during movement restrictions placed because of the pandemic and
- A proper and functional system of internal controls has been adopted by the Policing Authority.

During his briefing on the Internal Controls Audit for 2020, the Internal Audit Provider provided the Committee with insights on developments in control environments elsewhere arising from COVID-19. The Committee welcomed these insights.

The Finance Officer provided the Committee with reassurance that any delays that had arisen in payments to suppliers had been due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that these payments were now up to date. The Committee noted the reassurance and the fact that supplier payments would be closely monitored to minimise the risk of further late payments arising. The Committee asked that updates be provided to them at future meetings.

The Internal Audit provider presented the draft Annual Report of the Internal Auditors for 2020. The Committee discussed the findings in the report with the auditor, noting the auditors' conclusion that management had made commendable progress in implementing recommendations agreed, taking into account the substantial portfolio of internal audits undertaken between 2017 to 2020. The auditor reported that only a small number of audit recommendations remained outstanding, noting satisfaction with the management comments provided in these instances which reflected the agreed findings of subsequent audits. The Committee further noted the opinion of the Internal Auditor that the Authority has an adequate and effective system of internal controls over the areas examined in the internal audit work which provides significant assurance to effectively mitigate key inherent risks. The Committee approved the Report for submission to the Authority.

The Internal Audit Provider presented a range of options for inclusion in the Internal Audit Work Plan 2021. The matter was discussed and the Committee members shared their views. It was agreed that Internal Audit Provider would provide the risk universe of the Authority to the Executive, and that Internal Audit would then engage with the CEO in relation a range of possible areas for audit with a view to presenting a revised plan for consideration by the Accounting Officer and the Committee. In the meantime proposed terms of reference for an internal audit of the response of the Authority to the working environment created by COVID 19 will be provided to the Executive for consideration after which that audit will proceed once the terms of reference have been agreed.

The Finance Officer presented the draft Appropriation Account to the Committee. It was noted that the Account would be finalised for the Accounting Officer's signature in advance of submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General in March and that a statement on the impact of COVID-19 would be included in the account, as required by C&AG. It was noted that it was anticipated that the C&AG would begin the external audit in April.

7. Finance

The monthly Financial Report was noted. The Finance Officer provided an update in relation to the financial position at end of February 2020.