



Minutes of the VSS Audit and Risk Committee
Wednesday, 15 March 2017, 2pm
Grosvenor House, Belfast

ARC Members Present:

Colm Doran (CD)	ARC Chair
Richard Solomon (RS)	Board Member
Seamus Magee (SM)	Board Member
Bertha McDougall (BMcD)	Board Member

VSS Officers in Attendance:

Margaret Bateson (MB)	CEO and Accounting Officer
Maria McKeown (MMcK)	Business Support Officer (Minutes)

Other Officers in Attendance:

Kathy Doey (KD)	NIAO (External Audit)
Alan Davidson (AD)	Capita (Internal Audit)
Colin Moffett (CM)	TEO

A Apologies

A1 Apologies were received from RA and MM.

B Minutes of Previous Meetings

B1 9 December 2016 and 13 December 2016: The minutes of the previous meetings were agreed.

C Action Points

C1 The Committee noted the update provided.

D Conflict of Interest

D1 No conflicts of interest were declared.

D2 No conflicts of interest were declared.

D3 The Committee noted the 2016/17 Register of Interests register.

E Accounting Officer Update

The Chair asked the Chief Executive to present the Accounting Officer Update report. MB highlighted the following points:

E1 Progress against Corporate and Business Plan

MB reported on the following key points.

Political Context and Budget Position

- Following the election on 2nd March 2017, the political environment and budgetary position remains uncertain.
- A meeting of all ALB AO/CEO has been arranged with TEO on 14th March 2017. Any significant update will be sent to the Board following this meeting.
- The VSS is not expected to be advised of its budget position until the end of March 2017.

Individual needs programme

- At an operational level, all KPI are on track. The day to day focus for the team is on ensuring all individuals currently in receipt of support are able to utilize this (reminder letters to 1,241 clients with balances remaining), in addition to issuing any final award letters to victims and survivors prior to the financial year end.
- VSS has continued engagement with the Welfare Reform Team. This is working well. A total of 832 clients (out of 1,545 contacted) have returned signed Consent Forms to date. VSS maintains close contact with the team in DfC to ensure safe and secure transfer of client information between our organisations, in line with our obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Victims Support Programme

- The sole focus on this team has been on the assessment of applications effective April 2017 and beyond.

Corporate Services

- Maximisation of budget prior to the year end.
- Resolution of Governance issues raised by NIAO to ensure VSS accounts for 2016/17 are not qualified and that internal controls for INP 2017/18 are both victims centred and robust;

CEO Engagement

- RFJ Victims event Dealing with the Past;
- Pat Finucane Anniversary Lecture;
- Engagement with TEO Internal Audit in relation to INP governance;
- Engagement with Business Consultancy Services in relation to a review of the CVS;
- Recruitment of PEACE IV Case Managers.

Current Priorities

- Draft Business Plan and updated Corporate Plan from April 2017.
- Contingency Plan based on potential budget reductions.

E2 Progress against Budget

The Committee noted the update and no significant risks to note to date.

E3 Strategic Risk Register

The Committee noted the revised register, two new risks have been identified.

E4 INP Internal Controls and Management Arrangements

The Committee noted the letter received from TEO accounting officer approving the preferred option regarding the proposed INP internal control spot checks.

F Internal Audit Update

F1 2016-2017 Internal Audit Update

The Chair asked AD to present these papers.

All fieldwork has been completed and five draft reports to be issued by 31/3/17

G External Audit Update

The Chair asked KD for an update.

KD outlined to the committee that NIAO have been working closely with VSS and received positive management responses to their recommendations which have been implemented. VSS have kept NIAO updated regularly in relation to the ongoing spot checks.

H Standing Agenda Items

H1 ARC Self Assessment Update

MB provided an update in relation to the outstanding action points.

The recent recruitment process did not result in the appointment of an Accountant to the ARC. This will be re-advertised. Deadline extended from March 2017 to June 2017.

***AP1 The ARC Secretariat to Formalise Bi laterals meetings with the Accounting Officer, the Head of Internal Audit and the External Auditor Director;
- The Board Chair, ARC Chair and CEO.***

H2 ARC Training Update and Requirements

The Committee noted the update provided.

H3 Gifts and Hospitality Update

The Committee noted the update provided.

H4 Compliance update (Tabled)

MB provided an update on suspected Fraud cases:

- 1 case awaiting a CCNI final report.
- 3 cases closed by the VSS in May 2014, however still under FIOG consideration.
- 4 cases awaiting authorisation from TEO/FIOG to apply sanctions.
- 5 cases awaiting outcome from GFIS referral.
- 2 cases awaiting outcome from PSNI referral.

MB also provided an update on each of the Debt Recovery matters.

There were no new whistleblowing reports made in January 2017 and February 2017.

There were no new ombudsman complaints in February 2017.

H5 Procurement Update

The Committee noted the update provided.

I Risk Management Strategy

The Committee approved this paper.

J Any other Business

There was no other business.

K Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be agreed.