**MINUTES**

**Audit and Risk Committee Meeting**

**Date:** 23 June 2021

**Venue:** Virtual

**Present:** David Clarke – Chair

Harry Buscall – Chair

Micon Metcalfe – Member

James Norton – Member

Richard Smith – Member

George Stylianides – Member

Brian Tytherleigh – Member

**In attendance:** Rachel de Souza, Children’s Commissioner

Haroon Chowdry, Director of Evidence (Item 10)

Janette Threapleton, Director of Business Services

Jenny Wilcocks, Head of Finance

Seb Groth, Engagement Director – NAO

Ashleigh Thorius, Audit Manager – NAO

Karen Murray, Partner – Mazars

Stuart Frith, Senior Manager – Mazars

Chris Rising, OCC Head of Internal Audit – Macintyre Hudson

Tammy Manhire – Team Leader OCC Sponsorship – Sponsor Team, DfE

John Myers, Deputy Director – Sponsor Team, DfE

**Apologies:** None

**Board**

**Secretariat:**  Lyn Foster

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|  | **Summary of discussion** |
| **1.** | **Welcome and Introductions** |
|  | The Chair welcomed members and attendees and introduced new members; Harry Buscall and Micon Metcalfe. |
| **2.** | **Declaration of Interests** |
|  | No new additions. |
| **3.** | **Draft Minutes of 24 February 2021, Summary of Actions and Matters Arising** |
|  | The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2021 were approved.  **Actions:** None.  **Action Log:** All outstanding actions are complete.  **Matters Arising:** None. |
| **4.** | **Children’s Commissioner’s Report** |
|  | The Chair welcomed the Commissioner to her first meeting of the committee.  The Commissioner informed the committee that the period during her first 100 days in office had been very busy. Work included the launch of the ‘The Childhood Commission’, and ‘The Big Ask’ Survey which would inform the work of the Childhood Commission, which in turn will help to shape the longer-term strategy for the office.  Over half a million children responded to ‘The Big Ask’ which asked them to think about their lives, their aspirations, and the barriers to reaching their full potential. Initial analysis of the findings suggests that children have identified three main barriers to having a successful future; mental health, education and having things they could do safely.  Members noted that as we move forward from the Covid pandemic there was an opportunity to put children, particularly the most vulnerable, at the heart of government policy and noted the Commissioner’s commitment to take advantage of the current political momentum and to use her office to effect change for all children and young people.  **Actions:** None |
| **5.** | **Business Plan March 2021-May 2022 (draft)** |
|  | The Commissioner presented her draft business plan and set out her intent to take forward the key issues identified in the survey. The Commissioner explained that her final report of the Childhood Commission will propose a series of structural and policy reforms and interventions to support the best childhood, setting children on the firmest path to adulthood.  Discussion took place regarding the resourcing of the office and the Commissioner confirmed that this was an issue she would keep under review. The DfE had already provided some additional money to help support the work of the office.  **Action:** JT to circulate to members the 2021-22 Business Plan when it is published on the 30 June 2021. |
| **6.** | **NAO Audit Completion Report and VRM Updates**  i) OCC Audit Completion Report 2020-21  ii) OCC VFM Update May  iii) OCC VFM Update June |
|  | Karen Murray presented the NAO Audit Completion Report. She noted that they would be recommending an unqualified audit opinion for the 20120-21 Annual Report and Accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General. The accounts had been produced to a high standard and she thanked the Director of Business Services and the Head of Finance for their excellent support and cooperation.  VRM updates, ii) and iii) were taken as read.  **Actions:** None |
| **7.** | **Internal Audit, Head of Internal Audit Opinion 2020-21** |
|  | The Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-21 confirms that the Head of Internal Audit is satisfied that there are no major weaknesses in OCC’s risk management, control and governance processes.  Chris Rising confirmed that it was a very positive report, the assurance level for the four audit assignments undertaken during 2020-21 was substantial.  **Actions:** None |
| **8.** | **Chair’s Annual Report (draft)** |
|  | The Chair presented his draft annual report, highlighting that OCC’s progress in terms of governance, procurement and financial controls has been consolidated further in 2020-21 and had stood up well to the significant challenge of responding to new working arrangements and remote working during the Covid-19 outbreak.  **Actions:** Chair to finalise his report and share with Members at the September meeting. |
| **9.** | **Approval of Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21** |
|  | The 2020-21 draft Annual Report and Accounts was reviewed and approved.  **Actions:** None |
| **10.** | **Data Protection Officer (DPO) Annual Report 2020-21** |
|  | The Director of Evidence presented the data protection Annual Report 2020-21.  In March 2021, the DPO undertook a routine annual review of data protection compliance using the ICO Accountability Framework Self-Assessment and confirmed that the office was meeting expectations in all areas.  **Actions:** None |
| **11.** | **Risk Management and Assurance Framework Q4 Review**  i) Risk Register (June 2021)  ii) Assurance Framework Q4 (Jan-March 2021) Review |
|  | Janette Threapleton introduced the register and framework.  George Stylianides confirmed that there was a robust Assurance Framework and evaluation process in place.  **Actions:** September agenda to include a ‘deep dive’ into one of the key risks in order to understand the process for assessing the nature of the risk and for identifying mitigating actions. JT to liaise with GS to agree on the area for focus. |
| **12.** | **Budget and Management Accounts Update**   1. Management Accounts – May 2021 2. Counter Fraud Annual Action Plan – Q4 (Jan – March 2021) Review |
|  | Jenny Wilcocks summarised the management accounts and counter fraud action plan.  **Actions:** None |
| **13.** | **AOB**  **Policy, Procedures and Process Reviews** |
|  | a) Review of Policies and Procedures - noted  b) Farewell and grateful thanks to Brian Tytherleigh for his contributions to the committee during his term in office.  **Actions:** None |
| **Future meeting dates** | |
|  | * Wednesday 22 September 2021 * Wednesday 24 November 2021 * Wednesday 23 February 2022 * Wednesday 18 May 2022 * Wednesday 22 June 2022 |