

# Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority

Audit Risk and Assurance Committee Meeting

on

**Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 1.30pm**

**In Head Office, Downpatrick**

<b>Present:</b>	Kate Burns – ARAC Chair Harry Wick – Board Member Lynn Gilmore – Board Member
<b>In attendance:</b>	Kevin Quigley – Chief Executive Belinda McCaughey – Accounts Administrator
<b>DAERA Sponsor Branch (Observer)</b>	Joanne McClements
<b>DAERA Internal Audit</b>	Eveline Doherty (Teams)

	Action
<b>1. Welcome and Apologies</b>	
Kate welcomed all to the meeting. No apologies.	
<b>2. Declaration of Interests</b>	
Kate invited all to declare any interests they may have. No declarations were made.	
<b>3. Minutes of the meeting held on 02 June 2023</b>	
Minutes were approved	
<b>4. Matters Arising</b>	
<p>Paddy Griffin from DAERA successfully secured grant for the appointment of an Assistant Project Manager. Due to the short notice employment agencies were used in the recruitment process.</p> <p>Interviews have taken place – these were unsuccessful and this appointment can no longer proceed. Kate questioned if there was another way to utilise these resources to assist with grant applications for capital projects.</p> <p>Review of both the CCTV Policy and Records Management Policy has been delayed due to staffing issues but will be brought to the November meeting.</p>	Kevin / Belinda

	<b>Action</b>
All other matters arising are on today's agenda.	
<b>5. Raising a Concern – Draft policy for Review</b>	
<p>The Raising a Concern Policy has been updated and the name changed from Whistleblowing Policy.</p> <p>Like the previous Policy this has been modelled on the DAERA Policy.</p> <p>Kevin advised that previously issues were dealt with internally but we are too small an organisation to do this ourselves as there needs to be transparency between the investigator/mediator and the person raising the issue and so an external body is needed to do this work. Alan McKeown knows of suitable organisations and will advise.</p> <p>The committee sought clarity on access to the policy and Belinda confirmed it will be with all our policies contained in our Staff Handbook and available to all.</p> <p>After a discussion it was decided to take this new Raising Concerns Policy to the Board for approval to appoint an external body to carry out any functions should a Raising Concerns issue arise.</p>	Board
<b>6. Board email communication &amp; recent external issues</b>	
<p>Kevin spoke to the concerns with regard to the security of the sending of emails.</p> <p>Within NICS, appointed Board Members are supplied with hardware to access their emails and documents.</p> <p>There is an issue with sending confidential documents to personal email addresses.</p> <p>The committee discussed this and a recommendation will be made to the Board for the purchase of laptops for all Board Members.</p> <p>Belinda updated the committee on recent issues within the PSNI and the protections NIFHA have in place to prevent this happening.</p>	Board
<b>7. HR Capacity Issues</b>	
<p>Interviews will take place to appoint an Admin Officer.</p> <p>Belinda and Kevin remain under pressure due to staffing levels.</p> <p>In Portavogie two staff members are off on Sick Leave. A temporary harbour operative is being recruited.</p>	
<b>8. IIP Report</b>	
<p>The committee discussed the issues contained within the report.</p> <p>Main underlying issue is the level of pay – staff feel they are underpaid and that the Board and Kevin do not care.</p>	

	Action
<p>Kevin will prepare a formal report to the Board and will endeavour to spend 1 day per month in each of the harbours. This will hopefully improve relationships.</p> <p>Hopefully when the Pay and Grading Business Case is approved we will see our staff become more positive.</p>	Kevin
<b>9. Risk Register – August 2023</b>	
<p>Kevin spoke to those items which had changed since the previous register. Arrows will be amended to show worsening risk as an Up arrow.</p> <p>Overall 8 risks are getting better.</p> <p>No 6 – Failure to remunerate staff fairly. A mitigation plan needs to be developed in the event of Union strike action. Kevin will work on a Contingency Plan to take to the next Board Meeting.</p> <p>No 9 – Capital Funding. Waste management project for Ardglass and Portavogie did not get grant funding. Improving due to arrangements for grant funding of pre project works. Once Jenny returns from maternity leave more funding streams will be researched. In the interim Jen will be tasked to investigate, including the opportunities in PEACE + Measure 5.1.</p> <p>No 11 – Stakeholder Engagement. Improving engagement in Kilkeel.</p> <p>No 12 – Abandoned Vessels. Anchor has now been installed and initial testing was successful. Concrete to be poured and retested. Plan is to decommission Aquarius and Boy Cameron before end of year.</p> <p>No 13 – Dredging. Ardglass and Portavogie dredging has completed and Kilkeel is now underway.</p> <p>The 2023/24 Business Plan has been rejected by DAERA due to the size of the deficit. There is only £100k of Grant in Aid in this years DAERA budget.</p> <p>Kevin has rewritten the Business Plan taking into consideration figures from the first 5 months of the year. Problem with foreign crew is still there but to a lesser degree at this stage.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan will need the address the actual work of the Authority. We are not a trading organisation.</p> <p>We are heading into a dynamic environment.</p> <p>The committee agreed the Risk Register with one minor amendment and the change of direction of the arrows.</p> <p>The committee noted the volume, pressure and complexity of tasks being carried out by staff, and Kevin and Belinda and thanked them for their work.</p> <p>The amended Register will be taken to Board for approval at the meeting on 29 September 2023.</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>Kevin</p> <p>Kevin</p> <p>Kevin</p> <p>Board</p>

	<b>Action</b>
<b>10. Risk Appetite – Annual Review</b>	
<p>The committee discussed in detail the levels of Risk Appetite.</p> <p>Joanne will check if any guidance is available within DAERA.</p> <p>The view is that it is not very clearly set out and Kevin will rewrite this document and bring to the next ARAC meeting.</p>	<p>Joanne</p> <p>Kevin</p>
<b>11. Risk Management Policy – Annual Review</b>	
<p>This policy was discussed in detail.</p> <p>It was agreed to add an additional point to the Role of the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team list of responsibilities – ‘Setting the standards and expectations of staff with respect to conduct and probity’.</p> <p>The Policies and Procedures section will be updated to reflect what actually happens at the moment.</p> <p>The updated document will be brought to the next ARAC meeting for approval.</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>Kevin</p>
<b>12. Minutes of Accountability Meeting on 18 May 2023</b>	
<p>The committee reviewed the Action Points from this meeting.</p>	
<b>13. Any Other Business</b>	
<p>Eveline advised that the Audit Strategy runs out at the end of March 2024.</p> <p>Kevin has been sent a questionnaire to complete prior to setting the Audit Strategy for the next 3 years. The Risk Register should be attached to this questionnaire</p>	
<b>14. Date and location of next meeting</b>	
<p>Thursday 23 November 2023 in Kilkeel Harbour Masters Offices.</p>	