

**Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Public Health Agency
 Governance and Audit Committee
 Monday 10 January 2011, 10:00 am
 Conference Room, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HS.**

Present

Mrs J Erskine	Chair
Cllr S Nicholl	Non Executive Director
Mr R Orr	Non Executive Director
Ms M Karp	Non Executive Director

In Attendance

Miss R Taylor	AD of Planning & Operational Services, PHA
Mr D Charles	Deputy Head, Internal Audit, BSO
Mr K Moore	HSCB, Information Governance Manager (For Item 06/11)
Mr M Pitt	Partner, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (External Audit)
Mr P Cummings	Director of Finance, HSCB
Mrs C McKeown	Head, Internal Audit, BSO
Mrs K Braithwaite	Senior Operations Manager, PHA
Ms A Kane	Audit Manager, Northern Ireland Audit Office
Ms J Jackson	Secretariat
Ms M McMahon	Chair, PHA

Apologies

Mr T Mahaffy	Non Executive Director
Dr E Rooney	Chief Executive, PHA
Mr E McClean	Director of Operations, PHA

01/11	Declaration of Interests	Action
	Mrs Erskine asked if anyone present had any interests to declare before the commencement of the meeting. None were declared.	
02/11	Chair's Business	
	Mrs Erskine welcomed Miriam Karp, new lay member, to her first Governance and Audit Committee meeting. She also thanked Ms M McMahon, the PHA Chair for attending.	



The Chair gave a verbal update on the following matters:

- **Regional Governance and Audit meeting:**
This was originally designated an annual meeting however Mrs Erskine informed members that this has now changed to a quarterly meeting. Mrs Erskine attended the last meeting in November 2010 with other Chairs of HSC Governance & Audit committees. The remit of the meeting is the sharing of both learning and new ideas.
The next meeting is due to take place on 22nd February 2011 and Chair will be attending.
- **Joint HSCB/PHA Lay Advisor post**
The successful candidate has been written to offering the appointment. Due to changes to the original terms and conditions, on the advice of the Department, the candidate is considering whether to accept the appointment.
Unsuccessful candidates have been notified and offered post interview feedback.

03/11 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 October 2010 were agreed and signed by Chair.

04/11 Matters Arising

- **Mid Year Assurance Statement & Accountability Review**
Miss Taylor informed that the mid year assurance statement had been submitted and the Accountability Review meeting took place 1 December 2010.
- **HSCB/BSO Finance Working Group Update**
Mr Cummings notified members that these meetings have been held regularly to address issues which were raised in last year's management letter. Mrs Erskine requested that

Mr Cummings



minutes of the meetings continue to be sent to Miss Taylor to keep PHA informed of progress. This was agreed.

05/11 Finance

- **Fraud Liaison Update (GAC/01/11)**
Mr Cummings gave a verbal briefing of the report which detailed 2 new suspected fraud cases relating to the PHA. Both cases have been reported to the DHSSPS Counter Fraud Policy Unit and both are being investigated. It was agreed that the Fraud Liaison Officer should provide a progress update on both cases to each GAC meeting; Mr Cummings also assured members that no further action is required currently by PHA.

Fraud Liaison
Officer

Members noted the report and agreed the action.

- **Timetables for 2010-11 Final Accounts**
Mr Cummings informed the meeting that the timetable set down by DHSSPS is extremely challenging for 2010-2011 as it only allows 5 working days between closing of financial systems and submission of accounts. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that there are 4 public holidays to take account of. Mr Cummings advised that there are 2 options to consider – either staff are asked to work over the public holidays or PHA and HSCB may have to submit their final accounts late. Following discussion, members agreed that it is unacceptable to put staff under more pressure due to having to work public holidays. Members supported Mr Cummings in highlighting these concerns to the Department on behalf of the PHA.

Mr Cummings advised that he is in negotiation with the Department regarding changing dates and will keep the PHA informed of progress.

Mr Cummings



Mr Cummings also suggested that there would need to be at least one further GAC and an extraordinary board meeting to sign off the accounts. Mrs Erskine confirmed that dates would be agreed and circulated.

Mrs Erskine

06/11 Information Governance

Miss Taylor advised members that the Information Governance Manager post has been re-advertised; until appointment PHA will continue to rely on Ken Moore, HSCB.

Miss Taylor circulated the Information Governance Action Plan and asked Mr Moore to give an update. Mr Moore informed the committee that progress is limited with some actions delayed due in part to lack of staff. Delays can also be attributed to increasing numbers of Freedom of Information requests over the past months which have taken a substantial amount of time to complete.

Members were asked to note that training in Information Governance is being organised for February and March.

07/11 Governance

Miss Taylor introduced Karen Braithwaite to the meeting; Karen commenced employment with PHA in December 2010 and will be responsible for Governance.

- PHA Corporate Risk Register (**GAC/03/11**)
Miss Taylor presented the Corporate Risk Register as at 30 September 2010 for approval. She confirmed that 2 of the high risk areas which were identified in the previous submission have been reduced from high to medium; these are Working in Partnership and ECCH.



Members discussed the Corporate Risk Register at length. It was agreed that the Corporate Risk Register should be brought to the next full board meeting to enable all board members to have knowledge and understanding of the risks.

The report was approved.

- **Controls Assurance Standards**
Miss Taylor presented the Controls Assurance Standards paper for noting. She notified members that overall PHA is on course for substantive compliance to the programme across all controls assurance standards, with the exception of Records Management. While the score for this Standard is expected to show an improvement on last year, further progress has been slow due to the reasons stated under 06/11 (Info Gov).

The report was noted.

08/11 Standing Orders (GAC/05/11)

Miss Taylor presented the revised Standing Orders to the meeting for approval. She advised that the revised version took account of board members and AMT comments as well as Finance advice and DHSSPS Circulars; while there was still work to be completed on the Standing Financial Instructions (SFIs), Mrs Erskine suggested that the current draft could be approved subject to the addition of SFIs at a later date.

Members approved the Standing Orders for presentation at the next PHA board meeting for approval and adoption.

09/11 Internal Audit

- **Progress Report (GAC/06/11)**
Mrs McKeown gave a progress report on internal audit reports completed since the last GAC



meeting. She confirmed that a desktop audit has now been completed on the Lifeline Contract and the management response received.

A full internal audit is planned for Lifeline in the new financial year.

- **Proposed Revised Plan (GAC/07/11)**
Mrs McKeown submitted a revised 3 year audit plan taking account of the additional days required for a 'financial health check' assignment and an additional audit in respect of the Safety Forum.

Members agreed the revised plan.

Public Accounts Committee Report (GAC/08/11)

10/11 Mrs Erskine asked members to note the paper and advised that future reports will be circulated.

11/11 Audit Committee Self Assessment

Mrs Erskine informed members that Miss Taylor and herself would review last year's exercise and make recommendations for this year. The proposals will be circulated to members and Mrs Erskine requested that members respond with any suggestions for improvement.

All members

12/11 Any other business

Mr Pitt, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, advised that the external audit strategy will be ready for presentation at the next GAC meeting.

Mr Pitt

13/11 Date, time and venue of next meeting

Date: 13th April 2011

Time: 10.30am

Venue: Conference Room, PHA, 18 Ormeau Avenue,



Public Health
Agency

Belfast, BT2 8HS

Signed by Chair:

Date: