

Audit Board

Meeting 3 July 2023, via Skype for business

In attendance: Seamus McCarthy (Chair), C&AG
Colette Drinan, Secretary and Director of Audit
Andy Harkness, Director of Audit
Deirdre Quaid, Director of Audit
Mitchell McIntyre, Deputy Director, secretary to the Audit Board

1. Agreement of agenda

The draft agenda was agreed.

2. Noting of any conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest were reported in relation to the items scheduled for discussion at the meeting.

3. Minutes of previous meeting, matters arising and action list

The minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2023 were agreed with minor amendments and approved for publication on the Office intranet and website.

The action list was reviewed and discussed.

- The Board received an update on the progress of the project to develop a legislative summary database.
- In relation to Uisce Éireann, an audit team was appointed, planning for the 2023 audit has commenced and a review for potential reporting topics is underway. The Board also noted the likely appearance of Uisce Éireann at the PAC in the autumn.
- The Board agreed to close a further seven actions on the basis that relevant papers had been tabled for consideration at the current meeting or relevant action taken in the last three months.

4. Emerging risks

The Board noted that a potential unscheduled continuance of the PAC over the summer may put resourcing pressures on the Office.

5. Financial audit programme (paper A)

The Board noted the paper which reported progress to date on the Office's three financial audit KPI targets for 2023. The paper also noted that three accounts with periods ending in 2021 were certified since the last Board meeting, with progress made in the remaining six uncertified 2021 accounts.

6. Performance audit programme (paper B)

The Board noted the paper which presented updates on a number of matters relating to the performance audit directorate.

The Board noted progress made in relation to the ongoing performance audits for the 2023 annual report.

The Board noted the status of the five ongoing special reports. Special report 114 Emergency procurement of ventilators by the Health Service Executive was taken by PAC since the last meeting.

The performance audit directorate hosted the INTOSAI Professional Standards Committee (PSC) Performance Audit Subcommittee (PAS) annual meeting in Dublin Castle in March. The Board commends the Office staff who were involved in preparing for and running the successful event.

The PAS team also updated the Terms of Reference (ToR) of PAS in agreement with all members. The ToR were approved at the PSC steering committee meeting on 28 June.

It was noted that the Office is participating in and supporting a CIPFA steering/expert group in developing a masters-level equivalent performance audit qualification. This qualification should assist in meeting the Office's strategic plan commitment to offer an accredited course in evaluation to all reporting staff.

The Office signed a declaration to undertake an INTOSAI Development Initiative global cooperative audit of climate change adaptation actions (CCAA) to be published in September 2024 as part of the Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2023.

7. New/final audits (paper C)

The Board noted the paper and agreed a number of changes to the tables.

Uisce Éireann has been removed from the list of new audits because the audit team was assigned and planning started. Building Works and Building Control Regulator has been removed as the latest developments mean the C&AG will not audit the accounts.

The following accounts have ceased and are therefore removed from the tables:

- Sundry Moneys Deposit Account
- St Patrick's College of Education

8. Quarterly legislative update (paper D)

The Board noted the paper.

9. Disclosures log (paper E)

The Board noted the paper which set out summary details of disclosure cases that are currently open and those that have been closed since the last meeting.

10. Protected disclosures (paper K)

The Board discussed the paper which provided a summary of legal advice received in relation to interpretation of the obligations under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014, as amended by the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022. Finalisation of the proposal will be done by way of circularisation following the Board's further review and reflection.

11. Proposed 2023 year end audits for EQR (paper F)

The Board noted and approved the 2023 account year-end audits proposed for EQR, subject to minor amendments.

The Board discussed the categorisation of the Uisce Éireann audit and will consider again once the initial audit planning and risks assessment is completed. The Board discussed adding the Land Development Agency to the paper and requests the audit team to review the necessity when finalising the 2022 year-end audit.

The approved list will be updated to the management information drive and the EQRs assigned.

12. Irish Language scheme progress report (paper G)

The Board noted the paper which presented an update on the Office's obligations under The Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021. In particular, it noted

- the Office met its obligations for advertising in the Irish language as required by Section 10A of the Act, which came into effect on 10 October 2022
- the Office appointed the Deputy Director with responsibility for Compliance and Assurance to oversee the performance and reporting obligations under the Act as required by Section 3
- a number of metrics summarising the Office's implementation of commitments under the Irish Language Scheme.

13. Strategy implementation progress report (paper H)

The Board noted the paper and welcomes the progress the Office is making in completing the strategy actions underpinning the Office Statement of Strategy 2021-2025. The Board also notes that a mid-term progress review of the Statement of Strategy will be conducted in the coming weeks.

14. Follow-up paper on Office KPIs (papers I and J)

The Board noted both papers and the good work done to prepare them.

Paper I evaluated potential new KPIs in the context of the characteristics of a good performance measurement system. The Board discussed the measures and the appropriate balance between activity/output measures and impact measures. This paper will inform the Office's next strategic review.

The Board approved paper J which is a KPI guidance document prepared to implement recommendations from the internal audit review of KPIs.

15. Any other business

The Board noted the publication of the Office's Performance Report 2022 and the completion of the Annual Report of the Monitoring and Ethics Director 2022.

The Board congratulates Irena Grzebieniak and Sinéad Foy on their promotion to Deputy Director following an open competition.

The Board welcomes the Romanian Court of Accounts during the week of 3 to 7 July and are happy to be able to assist them with their ongoing good practice research and training.

The next regular Audit Board meeting is scheduled for Friday 10 November 2023.