

**Community Relations Council 108<sup>th</sup> Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025 11am**

**Online**

**Present:** Mr John McCallister (Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee), Mr M McDonnell (Board Member), Mr R Campbell (Board Member)

**In attendance:** Dr J Irwin (CEO), Mr P Garrity (Finance Manager), Mr A Allen (NIAO), Mr R Falls (Cavanagh Kelly), Mr C Telford (SCC), Mr N Lynas (TEO), Mr C McNickle (TEO) Ms H George (Governance Manager).

**Apologies:** None

**1. Welcome**

The Chair of the Committee, Mr J McCallister welcomed everyone to today's meeting.

**2. Conflict of Interests**

Mr R Campbell works at the same firm as CRC's legal advisors assisting with the NILGOSC pension case and pre-action to judicial review set out in the Risk Register. There is no conflict as Mr R Campbell was not involved in the procurement process and is not involved in these legal matters.

**3. Minutes**

The Minutes of the 107<sup>th</sup> Audit and Risk Assurance Committee were reviewed and approved.

**4. Matters Arising**

The CEO updated the Committee on one matter which arose at the last Audit Committee meeting. The Committee asked staff to check whether the updates made to the Risk Strategy would have any effect on the ARAC Terms of Reference. The CEO informed the Committee that a review of the Terms of Reference was conducted and that no updates are needed to align with the Risk Strategy changes.

The Committee thanked the CEO for this update.

**5. External Audit**

Mr R Falls informed the Committee that, as the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts have been signed off by the Committee and Board, the Audit Office will issue the final Report to Those Charged with Governance in due course.

## **6. Internal Audit**

### **i) Internal Audit Charter**

Mr C Telford provided the Committee with the updated Charter. He reminded the Committee that at the last meeting members asked for the Key Performance Indicators to be increased to 100%. That change has now been made. The Committee approved the final draft of the Charter.

### **ii) Extension to Contract**

Mr C Telford informed the Committee that SCC welcomed the recent feedback on their performance, and have accepted the extension of the contract for an additional year.

The Committee thanked Mr C Telford for this update and their work done to date.

## **7. Risk Register**

The CEO presented the Committee with CRC's Risk Register which sets out all of the amber and red risks.

Risk one 'Implementation of DoF Guidance' remains rated red. CRC await an update from TEO on their proposal to procure the assistance of the Strategic Investment Board.

Risk two 'Staffing' remains rated red. The staff member who took on the temporary position in the DFAP Team has now begun their ATI accreditation. The Pay Remits have been submitted and Mr P Garrity is working through a number of TEO queries. CRC hope to go back out to recruit a Finance Manager once the pay remits have been implemented and CRC staff pay is in line with NICS colleagues and thus a little more attractive to the market.

Risk three 'NILGOSC' case remains rated amber, as there have been no recent updates.

Risk Four '2025/26 Resource' was reviewed by the Committee, who agreed that it should be increased to a red rating. The Committee noted that CRC have still not received the outcome of the October Monitoring Round, which will have an impact on how many small grant awards the organisation is able to make in 2025/26. CRC's CRCD grant has now allocated all of the currently available budget. Applications are currently sitting on the system, which have been reviewed but awards are not able to be made while the outcome of the Monitoring Round is outstanding.

Risk five 'Board Members Terms' was reviewed and downgraded to an amber rating. The Committee noted that TEO confirmed that Ministers have now approved the extension of the three members' terms, who were due to leave in November 2025, to April 2026. Mr M McDonnell confirmed that he remains content to continue his term of office.

Mr N Lynas informed the Committee that TEO are seeking a meeting with HR Connect to begin this recruitment process, and are working on finalising the recruitment specifications and supporting documentation. The committee thanked Mr Lynas for his update.

The Committee thanked the CEO for presenting this report..

## **8. Register of Audit Recommendations**

The CEO presented the Committee with CRC's Register of Audit Recommendations.

Recommendation one relates to the outstanding pension issue. An update on this was provided earlier in the meeting.

Recommendation two relates to the staffing issues in the DFAP Team. An update on this was provided earlier in the meeting.

Recommendation three suggests CRC staff and Board take part in refresher training on governance and risk. The CEO confirmed that staff have undertaken this training. Board members will undertake this training when new Board members are recruited in 2026.

Recommendation five proposes that a document be compiled setting out the Good Relations Award process. The Engagement Team have drafted this document, and it will be taken to the next Board meeting for approval.

The Committee thanked the CEO for presenting and noted this report.

## **9. Investigations into Funded Groups**

Ms H George informed the Committee that there are no current investigations into funded groups.

## **10. Department of Finance Guidance**

Ms H George presented the Committee with the latest Department of Finance Guidance.

Guidance one instructs Departments and ALBs to include in future Business Cases the consideration of environmental and climate impact of the project/proposal. CRC will now update the Business Case Pro Forma to include this.

Guidance two sets out the requirements for Departments and ALBs to obtain approval before making commitments or incurring expenditure above a certain delegated limit. Ms H George informed the Committee that this piece of guidance does not change CRC's Board's delegated limit of £30k, expenditure above this requires the approval of TEO.

### **11. Direct Awards**

Ms H George informed the Committee that there have no direct awards made following the previous ARAC meeting.

### **12. Small Purchases without a Price Check**

Ms H George presented the Committee with a report on the recent purchases which did not require a price check., These were:

Companies House - £34 – Annual Confirmation Statement

Accounting Technicians Ireland - £702

SERC - £546.25

The Committee thanked Ms H George and noted the report.

### **13. Any Other Business**

None

### **14. Date of Next Meeting**

25<sup>th</sup> Nov 11am

### **15. Closed Session**

The CEO, Mr P Garrity, Ms H George, Mr C McNickle, Mr N Lynas left the meeting

Members held a closed session with the internal auditors and external auditors.