

Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Audit Risk and Assurance Committee

Date: 27th July 2022

Minuted by: Diane Piper (DP), Governance Secretary, Redress Scotland

In attendance

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| • William Matthews (WM) | ARAC Chair, Redress Scotland Deputy Chair |
| • Lynne Harvie (LH) | ARAC Interim Member, Redress Scotland Panel Member |
| • Colin Spivey (CS) | ARAC Interim Member, Redress Scotland Board Member |
| • Michael Steele (MSt) | ARAC Ad-Hoc Interim Member |
| • Joanna McCreadie (JM) | Redress Scotland Chief Executive |
| • Michael Stevens (MS) | Redress Scotland Head of Finance and Resources |
| • Mel Lowe (ML) | Redress Scotland, Policy and Engagement Lead |
- (Items 7 and 8)

Agenda item 1. Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting welcoming all present and introduced Diane Piper as the new Governance Secretary. The members expressed their thanks to Paula Craik for coordinating and administering previous meetings.

1.1 Apologies: There were no apologies.

1.2 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.

The Chair noted that adverts were now live for the recruitment of Non Executives to Redress Scotland and asked Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee members to please forward the link to those within their networks.

Actions

1. Link for Non Exec recruitment to be forwarded to committee members - DP

Agenda item 2. Minutes of the previous meeting 6th May 2022

The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee members reviewed the minutes of the meeting of 6th May 2022, which had previously been circulated.

The following points were raised

- CS noted an anomaly in item 4 between the minute and the report which had been presented at the meeting. The data will be rechecked and the minute updated and recirculated with a covering email.
- LH requested that the Grant in Aid letter be recirculated to the members
- A typing error was noted in item 8 to read “**End** of the year”.

With these noted adjustments the minute was approved as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Actions

2. Data to be checked and the minute reissued with a covering email JM / DP

Agenda item 3 Matters arising from the previous meeting

The Committee members reviewed the actions tracker and noted progress. It was agreed that the Conflict of Interest Policy and Schedule of Policies will be tabled at the next committee meeting.

Agenda item 4 Report from the Chief Executive

JM provided a verbal update on the work of Redress Scotland highlighting 4 key themes.

1. Development of Redress Scotland Team

This continues to be a key focus until all vacancies are filled.

2. Support and development of Decision Making

The training for 8 new panel members has been completed.

The Practice Development Group has been established. The Terms of Reference and work plan for this group are on today's agenda and will be presented to the Oversight Board.

The organisation has received its first panel request for oral testimony by an applicant. There is also an applicant with previous convictions and we have received our first panel request for a psychological report.

3. Our work as a Public Body

The Rules of Procedure and Standing orders are with Scottish Government. Further discussion and amendments are expected before final sign off.

Following feedback from Scottish Government the Corporate Plan will require further review. Approval will then be required from Scottish Ministers.

Further consideration has been given to the Publication Scheme and to support this all papers presented today have been marked with a note on publication and reasons for any exemption.

The organisation is now generating more data in relation to the applications received. The senior management team are developing the format and the detail of these reports with the aim to publish late in August or early September.

The first AGM for Redress Scotland went well with lots of positive feedback from those who attended.

Work continues on developing both the quality framework and on the experience of survivors. These are large pieces of work, integral to the structure and responsibility of a public body.

4. Risks

The Risk Register is on the agenda but JM noted the following;

a) The high rate of return of applications to Scottish Government by both administrators and panel members. The reason for return were primarily due to a lack of information or clarity on the application form.

b) The volume of applications in the pipeline is huge but difficult to plan for. JM is in discussion with Scottish Government in order to prepare for the level of applications which will be forthcoming.

JM concluded that the organisation continues to make progress and is growing in knowledge and experience. The key challenge is to ensure delivery within the expected time frames.

The Chair responded positively to the report adding that although there are challenges around potential workload and capacity, the organisation is delivering on its agenda and making excellent progress.

The committee discussed ways to improve the process and it was agreed that JM would follow up with Scottish Government if there was scope to establish mock panels for case workers.

The committee also asked if we knew of the actual number of closed applications and payments made. JM wasn't sure that we received this information from Scottish Government but would look into this.

The committee further requested that a narrative be prepared to accompany future reports. JM confirmed this would be done for the next meeting.

Action

- 3. Follow up with Scottish Government by offering the opportunity for case workers to participate in mock panels. - JM**
- 4. Investigate if data is available from Scottish Government on the number of completed applications – JM**
- 5. The Dashboard report to include a narrative around the date presented – JM**

Agenda item 5 Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee work plan

The committee confirmed that they had read and were content with the updated work plan and the Draft Terms of Reference.

The Chair added that he would prepare an annual a two-page summary report on the work of the Committee.

It was noted that the Terms of Reference should be reviewed annually and this will be updated in the work plan and policy schedule.

The Committee considered the draft Governance Statement and agreed to keep reviewing the statement throughout the year with final publication end of next year.

The Chair advised members that the Framework Agreement is still under discussion with Scottish Government.

Action

6. Schedule annual review of the committee terms of reference – DP

Agenda item 6 Financial reports

MS talked to the financial reports which had previously been circulated.

Included in the Annex to the financial report is the specification for appointment of internal auditors. If approved by the Committee this will be forwarded to Scottish Government procurement with the aim of having auditors in post by September, Audit Scotland have been contacted in relation to appointment of external auditors.

Template for Panel members

The Chair thanked MS for the cost model and recruitment update reiterating the unpredictable nature of the current environment in relation to both staffing and volume of applications.

The Chair recommended sign off of the audit plan and the Committee concurred.

A number of points were raised in relation to the financial papers.

- Future reports will include details of actual expenditure in addition to budget and forecast and how the actuals matched against the underlying budget assumptions.
- The cost of the panel chair undertaking an additional half day would also be included into the model

Action

7. Financial reports to include details of actual expenditure and RAG for cash flow reporting - MS

8. Cost of panel chair to be included in the cost model for panel sittings- MS

Agenda item 7 Risk register for Redress Scotland

ML, Policy and Engagement Lead, was welcomed to the meeting.

Detailed discussion followed on the potential risks around decision making by panels.

The Chair highlighted the potential danger of a lack of consistency in decision making. The organisation is developing an evidence base around decision making ready for scrutiny by audit.

The question of judicial review was raised and JM confirmed that the potential for judicial review forms part of panel member training. The aim is to ensure decisions are right first time.

The risk of judicial review will be added to the register.

Action

- 9. *The potential for a decision resulting in judicial review will be added to the Risk Register***
- ML

Agenda item 8 Complaints

ML presented the paper on complaints handling within Redress Scotland.

Following discussion it was agreed that further work would be undertaken to define what is a complaint and the appropriate response. Guidance would also be given to identify those complaints which fall out with the organisation's sphere of responsibility.

CS highlighted that there will be vexatious complainers and this should also be covered in the guidance. The Chair has available a policy on vexatious complainers which he will share with ML and JM.

MSt recommended capturing the time spent on complaints and to specify those areas which are within our gift to influence.

Action

- 10. *Further definition required as to what is a complaint, add section on vexatious complainers. ML***
- 11. *Track time spent on complaints – ML and MS.***

Agenda item 9 Quality assurance and improvement

The Chair noted that this was a full section on quality and improvement and each paper would be addressed individually.

9.1 Development of quality assurance and improvement in Redress Scotland (to include recruitment, work on framework and errors, with error report as an appendix)

JM presented this theme for discussion. The organisation is looking in detail at the options available for a QA system to meet its needs.

LH suggested considering the Best Value Framework which was felt would fit the organisation. It has a good 360% application and used by both internal and external audit. EFQM and How Good is our School all sit into Best Value Framework.

9.2 Draft Practice development group terms of reference

The Chair welcomed this initiative which will support operations and quality assurance. In terms of the governance process the terms of reference were for noting by this Committee and the Oversight Board would sign off the creation of the group and its role within the organisation.

9.3 Survivor Forum - Feedback from applicants on their experiences of the redress scheme

Initial feedback from Survivor Forum was provided by ML. Most of the feedback relates to their experience with Scottish Government. Further analysis will be required to separate feedback related to Redress Scotland from Scottish Government.

Agenda item 10 Digital development

JM reminded the Committee that we are an entirely digital organisation with no dedicated software. The organisation uses Government Systems. Specifications for case management, people and finance are being explored together with training needs. This item is raised for awareness only. Any change will have cost and resource implications and will have to ensure these provide the quality assurance information we require. The Chair noted that the auditors will be interested in this area.

Agenda item 11 Expenses policy

The Chair noted for the minute and the register that all members had an interest in this item as it impacts on panel and Committee members.

MS advised that the Scottish Government policy formed the basis of the draft policy presented to the Committee. Any unforeseen eventualities, not specified in the policy, would require approval by a line manager or JM. The policy was also updated to reflect current work practices.

The policy was approved with the undernoted changes

- Remove that Redress Scotland would we pay professional fees for panel members and Committee members.
- CS noted that the policy was written with staff in mind but it was noted that under item 11 the working day should be amended to 7.5 hours.

The Committee approved the Draft Expenses policy, subject to the recommended changes, and will go to Oversight Board in August for final approval.

Action

16. The Committee approved the Draft Expenses policy subject to the recommended changes and will go to Oversight Board in August for final approval –MS

Agenda item 12 - Any Other Business

Before closing the meetings, the undernoted points were raised

- JM noted that we will have to draft a suitable policy to cover for Fraud. This will be carried forward to a future meeting.
- The proposed Terms of Reference use paper descriptors i.e. for Information, Scrutiny or Decision. The ARAC were in agreement to these being used going forward.
- CS enquired about members' fee uplifts. MS advised that a recommendation has been received but final fees have as yet been agreed.
- It was also noted that the Public Bodies Unit publish a list of all reporting requirements. The question arose of where do these fit into our governance structure. Agreed to include Johnny Gwynne, Chair of the Oversight Board on the distribution list.

Agenda item 13 Review of Meeting

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and her team for the high quality of papers received and the high level discussions which ensued. The Committee were left reassured and informed in what are very challenging circumstances. The breadth of experience of members has added value to the discussion.

The technology worked well and lastly the Committee confirmed they would have been content for this to have been a public meeting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 12.35pm

