



**Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee
6 October 2022**

Attendance

Committee:	Paul Dempsey (Chair), James O'Boyle and Commissioner Emily Logan
Secretary:	Pauline Byrne
Management/Staff:	Aileen Healy (Director of Administration), Amanda McLoughlin (Head of Finance), Ellen Kenny (Data & Governance) Joanne O'Donohue, Item 5.3 & 6.1 David Mc Cormack, Item 5.2
Visitors:	Walter Johnston and Annmarie Dillion (Internal Audit, Department of Justice) – Item 5.1 Dera McLaughlin (Mazars) – Item 5.2

1. Closed Session

The Audit & Risk Committee ('ARC') met with the Ombudsman Commission in private. The Chair of the ARC and the Chair of the Ombudsman Commission agreed and signed the Audit and Risk Charter.

2. Committee Chair Opening Statement

The Chair acknowledged the good work that is being carried out by GSOC in relation to the reports that had been provided to the ARC. He noted the professional approach and the organisation's commitment to risk and controls.

No conflicts of interest were noted.

3. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous ARC meeting were approved and it was agreed that the minutes would be published on GSOC's website.

4. Director of Administration Update

The Director of Administration briefed the Committee on the main developments occurring within GSOC since the last meeting, including:

- Extensive discussions with the Department of Justice ('DoJ') to secure resources for 2023 and the future, noting an increase of 21% in the 2023 allocation and that there would be further engagement with the Department regarding the preparations for the transition to

the arrangements under the new legislation and the future resource requirements on foot of the organisational review which is currently being undertaken by Grant Thornton.

- Progress on the Grant Thornton work, noting high engagement by staff and external stakeholders. This has included a staff survey with a 77% response rate, a series of one to one interviews and workshops with staff and managers and meetings with a broad range of external stakeholders. They will complete an international benchmarking exercise prior to drafting their report which will set out a new operating model for the organisation in addition to addressing resource requirements and an implementation roadmap. The Committee enquired about any risks identified and were advised that the review had identified findings across a number of themes and would be addressed in their recommendations.
- The Department of Justice have advised that the draft Policing Security and Community Safety Bill will be sent to Government in November. GSOC has been closely engaged with the Department, submitting detailed observations on the draft Bill and following this up with further engagement and clarification. The target date for the implementation of the new legislation is 1 January 2024.
- Approval to proceed with a capital project for the development of a new case management system. This project is crucial to the preparation for the new legislation and arrangements are being advanced to manage the project and procure a new system. The Committee noted the risks inherent in a project of this nature and emphasised the importance of project management to successfully deliver it.
- An RFT has been prepared and DPER sanction is awaited for the procurement of a training partner to develop and deliver an accredited training programme for GSOC staff.
- The current staffing levels in GSOC is 155, an increase of 34 since the start of the year. A number of other positions are in the process of being filled and it is expected to have a total staff complement of approximately 170 by year end. Despite this success in recruitment, concerns remain in relation to staff retention and delays in recruiting and vetting staff. The Committee advocated the importance of exit interviews to learn about improvements that can be made, the need for good relationships with staff, and the importance of strong corporate functions, particularly in HR, ICT and Training.

5. Audit

The ARC was advised that the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed the audit of GSOC and draft management comments have been submitted. It was agreed that the senior auditors from the C&AG would be invited to meet with the ARC at its next meeting.

5.1 Review of Internal Controls 2021

The Chair welcomed the representatives from the DoJ Internal Audit Unit, who presented the findings of the GSOC - Review of Internal Controls 2021. They expressed satisfaction that their recommendations are implemented. They noted no high-level recommendations in the report and could give assurance that GSOC have an effective internal controls system in place. The intention to carry out a follow up audit to assess the implementation of audit recommendations was noted.

There was a discussion in relation to internal audit planning for 2023, based on a risk assessment which has been completed by the DoJ Internal Audit.

The further requirements for Internal Audit in GSOC were discussed in light of the new legislation which will see GSOC become a Vote holding body. While noting that the Department Internal Audit function can continue to support GSOC, including through access to external contractors, GSOC will need to have its own internal audit service when the new Vote is in place and it would be beneficial to have this arrangement in place in advance.

5.2. ICT Delivery Model Audit

The Chair welcomed the representative from an external firm, who were engaged to undertake an ICT Service Delivery Model Audit review for GSOC in late 2021. The findings and recommendations of the audit were presented and discussed in detail. While it was noted that some time has now passed since the completion of the audit and, significantly a number of recommendations have been addressed or are in the course of being addressed, nevertheless a number of high recommendations remained outstanding. It was emphasised that the implementation of these recommendations needs to be prioritised and a need to allocate resources to address them, in order to ensure that the organisation has an ICT model that is fit for purpose and is compliant with relevant standards. It was noted that the management comments, together with the work undertaken since the audit was completed, convey that the correct approach is being taken, however not all actions are within management's control, particularly with the current level of resources in the ICT Unit. It was emphasised that GSOC will need to build ICT capability in the longer term, but that support, particularly in a number of key areas of expertise, will have to be sourced to meet priority needs in the meantime.

5.3. Quality Management

It was agreed that consideration of the draft Quality Management Report, "A Review of Section 94 (5) Supervised Investigations", would be deferred to the next meeting.

6. Governance

6.1. Risk Management

The Committee discussed GSOC's draft Risk Management Framework and, subject to some minor drafting, recommended that it be brought to the Commission for approval. It was noted that the document can be reviewed and updated as risk management practice evolves. The draft Risk Register was reviewed and the categorisation of risks discussed. It was noted that the policy framework sets out the establishment of a Risk Management Group to monitor the risks on the register and oversee the implementation of mitigation actions, and the ARC recommended that this be established at an early date.

It was recommended that Risk Management should be reviewed quarterly at the Commission meetings.

6.2. GDPR

The Committee discussed the Data Protection audit report compiled by external providers in 2020. It was noted that the Data Protection Policy is due for review, with consideration of the new guidance issued by the Data Protection Commission in relation to breach management notifications.

7. AOB

Training for Committee members was discussed and availability confirmed.

The date for next meeting has been set for 7 December 2022.