



**Minutes of Audit and Risk Committee
28 June 2023**

Attendance

Committee:	Paul Dempsey (Chair), James O'Boyle and Emily Logan
Secretary:	Pauline Byrne
Management/Staff:	Aileen Healy (Director of Administration), Amanda McLoughlin (Head of Finance), item 5, Valerie Woods (Principal Officer of Administration) item 4, Ellen Kenny (Data & Governance), Joanne O'Donohue (Chief Risk Officer) item 6 & David McCormack (ICT) item 7

1. Committee Chair Opening Statement

The agenda was approved and no conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the ARC meetings on 29 March 2023 and 5 April 2023 were approved.

3. Director of Administration Update

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

- The Activity Report, noting the Committee's view that certain elements of the report were more appropriate for inclusion on a quarterly rather than a monthly basis, had been taken on board. The format of the Activity Report would continue to develop as a management tool and would be routinely circulated to the ARC.
- Matters which had received media attention in recent months. The risks associated with these issues and a number of actions required to address same were discussed. It was emphasised that internal investigation of the matters concerned be undertaken as soon as possible, and the policies, codes of conduct etc., be updated and measures taken to raise staff awareness of appropriate conduct, in order to ensure and give assurance regarding the protection of GSOC data.
- The business case to seek additional resources for the 2024 estimates are almost complete and will be forwarded to the Department of Justice (DoJ) in the coming weeks. These set out a detailed case for additional resources to support the new remit and additional demands on

the organisation with the expected commencement of the Policing Security and Community Safety (PSCS) legislation in January 2024. It is envisaged that negotiations in relation to the estimates commence between the Department of Public Expenditure (DPER) and DOJ in July.

- A request for sanction has been submitted by the DOJ to DPER for the positions of Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with the expectation that these positions will be filled on a designate basis in advance of commencement of the PSCS legislation. The DOJ are currently working with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) regarding the recruitment process and anticipates the advertisement of the positions in July 2023, pending sanction from DPER. Noting the probably lengthy timeframes for these positions, Committee members emphasised the critical importance of having the top positions filled in advance of the establishment of the new organisation.
- The Comptroller & Auditor General have completed their audit of the 2022 Financial Statements.
- The tender process for the new Case Management System (CMS) procurement services has been completed and awarded to the successful tender. Work has commenced with this contractor on a two-tier procurement system to procure a new system, and a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire is due to be published in early July. A business analyst is currently engaged in mapping GSOC's current CMS processes and future processing will also be mapped.
- Accredited training is currently being sourced for GSOC in order to provide specialised training for all staff according to their specific areas of work.
- GSOC's 2022 Annual Report has been submitted to the Minister for Justice and the statutory five-year report is currently with the Ombudsman Commission for review.
- The Commission was invited to meet with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Public Petitions on 1 June 2023. Amongst the topic's discussed was resourcing for GSOC.

4. Transition

The Committee was briefed on the progress of GSOC's transition programme. In particular, it was noted that:

- The PSCS Bill is at Dáil Committee stage of the Oireachtas legislative process and the DOJ remains committed to a commencement date of 1 January 2024.
- It was noted that the name of the new organisation has not yet been confirmed as it must have an Irish name in compliance with forthcoming changes to the Official Languages Act, and that the Minister will bring an amendment in this regard to the Seanad stage.
- Governance of the transition project, noting the establishment of the Phase 2 (P2), Project Board as GSOC now enters into the implementation phase of transition. The P2 Project Board have held two meeting to date. The Ombudsman Commission meets once a month to oversee the transition process and to deal with any matters escalated for decision.
- The transition team is currently developing an implementation plan for GSOC, which will set out in detail the tasks to be undertaken to ensure readiness for essential Day 1 requirements on the commencement of the legislation.

- Staff in GSOC are updated regularly on the stages of the PSCS Bill through Communications Days and a fortnightly Staff Bulletin.
- Work being undertaken by the Progress Reform Group by GSOC and An Garda Síochána (AGS) under the auspices of the overall DoJ PSCS Implementation Programme. Workshops are currently being conducted to map the complaints handling process in line with the new legislation. The aim of the process mapping is to enable casework and investigations streamline processes for the new organisation and will feed into the requirements for the new CMS.
- The Committee requested that a representative from the Process Reform Group attend the next ARC meeting to provide a detailed presentation on how processes are being redesigned, emphasising that business knowledge is critical to ensure the success of this process in order to address concerns noted in the Grant Thornton report and in the media reporting generally around perceived inefficiencies in current processes.

There was a discussion on the proposed staffing levels for the new organisation and the challenges faced regarding accommodation, noting that a system of shared accommodation would be a first step to approaching the need to accommodate an expanding staff. It was noted there are plans to undertake a site visit to another body which have implemented this practice.

5. Audit

GSOC's Head of Finance briefed the Committee on the draft 3-year Internal Audit Plan, noting that this has been updated in line with the Committee's discussions at the last meeting. The Committee discussed the plan in further detail and agreed that it represented a substantial agenda for the coming years, and reflected the high-level risks facing the organisation, while taking account of recent audits and work that is ongoing in addressing the recommendations arising. It was noted that the plan would be a regular agenda item for the Committee and would be updated as necessary in light of emerging events. The plan was approved for submission to the Commission.

6. Risk Management

The Chief Risk Officer (CRO) briefed the Committee on the Risk Register noting that:

- The Risk Management Group have met on four occasions to score and assign owners to the identified risks on the Risk Register. This has resulted in the production of the draft risk register which has now been submitted for the Committee's consideration and approval, following observations being sought from the Senior Management Team (SMT). Once signed off by the ARC, it will be submitted to the Ombudsman Commission for approval.
- There have been no new risks identified since the previous quarter and the register has been updated to reflect recent events. A number of low-level risks currently remain on the Risk Register and it may not be necessary to continue to report these at a high level although they will still need to be monitored.
- Plans to communicate with staff to raise awareness of risk on approval of the Risk Register.

The Committee noted the importance of having a high level of risk awareness within GSOC and welcomed that there is now a designated point of contact for each risk. The Committee emphasised the importance of having high risk awareness in relation to operational matters, noting the tendency for operational risk owners to view risk from a case rather than an organisational perspective. It was decided to invite the Director of Investigations and Operations to attend the next ARC meeting, followed by senior managers from each of the operational areas.

The Committee acknowledged the extent and quality of work completed to bring the Risk Register to completion and recommended it to the Commission.

7. ICT

The Head of ICT briefed the Committee on the progress of work completed by the unit in relation to the Draft Data Recovery Plan. The Committee noted the successful implementation of the VM Ware replication and that Phase 3 of the business continuity is due for completion at the end of June 2023. A fully documented process and flow for the CMS isolated network is due for completion in Q3. All testing processes conducted by the ICT will be fully documented and arrangements will be made for further scheduled testing. The Committee noted that testing reminders will issue to staff via the ICT service desk and it is proposed to conduct testing on a bi-annual basis. The Committee welcomed the great progress that has been made in addressing this area.

8. AOB

The next ARC meeting is scheduled for 21 September 2023.