



DfC

Department
for Communities

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Corporate Governance Framework

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Document Management

(1) Summary

The purpose of this section is to provide details of the officials, versions and controls relating to the management of the Corporate Governance Framework.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Corporate Governance Framework sets out the arrangements which have been established to ensure the proper and effective management of the Department for Communities (DfC).
- 1.2 It describes the governance structures that have been established, sets out the roles and responsibilities of those charged with governance responsibilities and provides details of the key internal control, risk management and corporate governance support arrangements which apply to the delivery of the Minister for Communities' agenda.
- 1.3 The Department is formally subject to the direction and control of the Minister and it operates under the arrangements established by the Assembly whereby the Accounting Officer is personally accountable for the use of its resources. It follows that the governance system described in this document operates within the authority of the Minister and the personal responsibilities and accountabilities of the Accounting Officer.
- 1.4 The Framework reflects the key principles of good practice set out in Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: **Code of Good Practice NI 2013**. It also follows guidance laid

out in **Managing Public Money Northern Ireland** and the **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI) 2018**

- 1.5 The Departmental Management Board (the Board) and the Senior Team recognise and are committed to providing the necessary leadership to set the tone from the top to reinforce the importance of good governance and to promote better governance across the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).

2. Corporate Governance: Definition and Principles

Definition

- 2.1 Corporate Governance is the way in which an organisation is directed and controlled. It defines the distribution of rights and responsibilities among the different stakeholders and participants in the organisation and determines the rules and procedures for making decisions on corporate affairs, including the process by which the organisation's objectives are set, how resources are controlled and how performance and risks are monitored and assessed.

2.2 The effectiveness of direction and control of an organisation depends on:

- **Governance:** how well an organisation plans, sets, communicates, undertakes and monitors its corporate objectives
- **Risk Management:** how the organisation identifies, considers and manages the risks to the achievement of corporate objectives
- **Business Controls:** how the Board of the organisation assures itself and its stakeholders that it is in control of its business and the risks to the achievement of its objectives, including how the Department discharges its responsibilities in relation to the ALBs for which it has responsibility

Principles

2.3 The key principles of Corporate Governance are:

- **Openness and Transparency:** to ensure that stakeholders can have confidence in the decision-making processes and actions of the Department in the management of its activities and in the individuals in the Department. Being open, through meaningful consultation with stakeholders and the

communication of full, accurate and clear information, leading to effective and timely action and helping to ensure that there is full scrutiny of activities

- **Integrity:** comprising both straightforward dealing and completeness, is based upon honesty, selflessness and objectivity and high standards of propriety and probity in the stewardship of public funds and the management of the Department's affairs. It derives from the effectiveness of the control framework and the personal standards and professionalism of the individuals within the Department. It is reflected in the Department's decision-making procedures and in the quality of its financial and performance reporting
- **Accountability:** the process whereby the Department and the individuals within it are responsible for their decisions and actions, including their stewardship of public funds and all aspects of performance, and submit themselves to appropriate external scrutiny. It is achieved by all parties having a clear understanding of those responsibilities and having clearly defined roles in a robust management structure

- **Leadership:** articulating a clear vision for the Department and giving clarity about how policy activities contribute to achieving this vision, including setting risk appetite and managing risk
- **Effectiveness:** bringing a wide range of relevant experience to bear, including through offering rigorous challenge and scrutinising performance
- **Sustainability:** taking a sensible, long-term view about what the Department is trying to achieve and what it is doing to get there

2.4 The arrangements set out in subsequent sections below are underpinned by these principles.

3. Organisation and Governance Structures

- 3.1 DfC is a large, complex organisation with responsibility for a diverse range of functions including community regeneration and housing, community cohesion encompassing the arts, sport, museums and libraries and cultural activities, helping people into the labour market and countering poverty and social inclusion.
- 3.2 It has a budget of some £7.1bn (including approximately £6bn on social security and pension payments) and employs over 8,000 staff (around one third of the NI Civil Service).

3.3 The organisational structure is set out at **Annex A** and is built around four discrete but inter-related business areas with responsibility for policy and service delivery in the following areas:

Work & Inclusion

Working Age, Universal Credit, Evaluation of Welfare Reform, Working Age Services, Child Maintenance and Wraparound Services, Work and Wellbeing Division, Social Security Policy and Legislation, Pensions Disability and Benefit Security.

Engaged Communities

Social Inclusion, Historic Environment, Community Empowerment, Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Voluntary and Community, Active Communities, Infrastructure Planning and Delivery Support and Culture.

Housing, Urban Regeneration & Local Government

North West Development Office, Regional Development Office, Belfast Regeneration Directorate, Local Government and Housing Regulation, Housing Policy and Performance.

Strategic Planning and Resources

Financial Management, Asset Management and Governance, Corporate Services and Information Services

Each of these areas is headed by a Deputy Secretary reporting to the Permanent Secretary/Accounting Officer.

3.4 The governance framework for the Department is built around this organisational structure. Given the scale of the Department it reflects significant delegated authority to each of the business areas above operating within the principles of governance set out at paragraph 2.3.

3.5 To ensure a cohesive and corporate approach to the many challenges faced by the Department the Accounting Officer, in line with best practice, has established the Board to set direction for and oversee the activities of the Department.

Departmental Management Board

3.6 The Board exists to assist the Permanent Secretary, as Accounting Officer, in meeting the corporate governance responsibilities for the Department. The Board's Operating Framework – which sets out the functions, aims and responsibilities of the Board and its membership – is at [Annex B](#).

3.7 The Board's responsibilities include the provision of advice on a number of matters which are reserved to the Board and which are not delegated to business areas. These are set out in the Board's Operating Framework.

3.8 The Board operates as a collegiate committee under the leadership of the Permanent Secretary to manage the running of the Department. The Board is not the principal policy making body within the Department, as policy is determined by the Minister. However, the Board may discuss policy in the context of analysing options, strategic planning and operational management. In the policy area, the Board operates in an advisory and consultative capacity, offering guidance when sought.

3.9 All Board members are required to adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life which are set out at [Annex F](#).

Membership of the Departmental Management Board

3.10 The Board comprises:

- the Permanent Secretary of the Department (Chair)
- four Deputy Secretaries
- up to two Non-Executive Board Members.

The Board will be supported by Directors from the following Divisions who attend Board meetings:

- Director of Asset Management and Governance
- Director of Corporate Services
- Director of Financial Management

The NICS HR Business Partner for DfC also attends Board meetings.

Other Directors or managers may be invited to attend for specific items.

Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

3.11 The Board is supported in its role by the Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (DARAC), which is a committee of the Board with no executive powers and which is independent of the executive structure of the Department. The role of the Committee is to support the Board in its responsibilities for issues of risk control and governance. This encompasses the provision of independent advice, information and assurance to the Board and the Accounting Officer on the operation of the Department's system of internal control and includes:

- reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances in meeting the Board and Accounting Officer's assurance needs
- reviewing the reliability and integrity of these assurances

This Committee, which is chaired by a Non-Executive Board Member, is attended by the Accounting Officer, the Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning and Resources, the Director of Financial Management, the Director of Asset Management and Governance, the Head of Governance, the Head of Internal Audit and the NI Audit Office (NIAO). Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out at [Annex C](#).

Departmental Information Assurance Committee

3.12 The Board is also supported by the Departmental Information Assurance Committee (DIAC). The role of the Committee is to ensure the Department has in place the appropriate policies, management and governance systems to effectively protect the vast volume of Information which the Department holds and also to ensure that cyber risk is properly managed. This Committee is chaired by the Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning & Resources in her role as Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) supported by the Information Officer, the IT Security Officer, the Departmental Accreditor, Head of Analytical Services, the Head of Internal Audit and relevant information Assurance Officers. Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out at [Annex D](#).

Other Management Committees

3.13 In addition to the establishment of the above sub-committees which relate directly to the functions of the Board, a number of management committees may be established. The purpose of these committees is to facilitate the delivery of departmental business, encourage sharing of experiences and embed better corporate working.

Weekly Business Review

3.14 The Weekly Business Review is the regular meeting of senior management to review ongoing operational issues, cross-cutting issues, media interests, and forthcoming Executive and Assembly business. It is chaired by the Permanent Secretary and membership comprises the four Deputy Secretaries, the Principal Information Officer, the Director of Financial Management, the Director of Asset Management and Governance, the Director of Corporate Services and the Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer.

Senior Management Team Quarterly Meeting

3.15 The Senior Management Team meets on a quarterly basis. This enables the Permanent Secretary to update all Grade 5s on current strategic issues and enables them to update their colleagues on current issues which may have a cross-cutting impact on other business areas.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Minister

4.1 The functions of the Department are exercised at all times subject to the direction and control of the Minister. The Minister is also responsible and accountable to the Assembly for the policies, programmes and actions of the Department.

Communities Committee

4.2 The Assembly's Committee for Communities advises and assists the Minister for Communities by undertaking a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with regard to key activities of the Department. The Minister may be accompanied by, or represented at, Committee sessions by relevant officials.

Permanent Secretary

4.3 The Permanent Secretary is the Minister's principal adviser across the full range of Ministerial responsibilities. In terms of the Department's corporate governance arrangements, the Permanent Secretary chairs the Board and is also the Accounting Officer for the Department.

4.4 As Accounting Officer, the Permanent Secretary is responsible for ensuring that:

- a sound system of internal control is maintained by the Department to support the achievement of the Minister's policies and objectives, the effectiveness of which is reviewed regularly
- public funds assigned to the Department are managed with propriety, are duly safeguarded and are deployed economically, efficiently and effectively
- the departmental assets are controlled and safeguarded, and that there are appropriate checks in place
- appropriate staffing levels are maintained and staff are appropriately managed and developed to deliver departmental business objectives
- the departmental accounts are properly presented as prescribed by HM Treasury and DoF
- the correct financial procedures are followed and accounting records are maintained in a format suitable for management and in the form prescribed for published accounts
- all relevant financial considerations are taken into account, and where necessary brought to the Minister's attention, when considering policy proposals

- the impact of the Department's activities on others is properly identified and, where appropriate, taken into account
- the Governance Statement is completed in line with DoF guidelines
- the Board is established, comprising both executive and non-executive members

4.5 As Accounting Officer, the Permanent Secretary must be able to assure the Assembly and the public of high standards of probity in the management of public funds. The Accounting Officer must personally sign the Department's Accountability Report which forms part of the Department's Annual Report and Accounts.

4.6 Acting within the authority of the Minister(s) to whom he or she is responsible, the Accounting Officer should ensure that the Department, and any subsidiary to it or organisation sponsored by it, operates effectively and to a high standard of probity. The main duties of Accounting Officers are set out in **Managing Public Money Northern Ireland**.

4.7 As Chair of the Board, the Permanent Secretary is responsible for:

- ensuring the Board fulfils its responsibilities

- ensuring that the business of Board meetings is conducted efficiently and effectively, that there is open debate and that all views are heard
- summing up Board debates and seeking agreed decisions;
- controlling the order of Board meetings
- ensuring that systems are in place to provide Board members with accurate and timely information of good quality to allow the Board to consider properly all matters before it
- ensuring that a Board effectiveness review is performed annually with independent input as necessary, and that results are acted upon
- ensuring adherence to the Comply or Explain principle set out in Corporate Governance Guidance
- notifying the Board of any matters that threaten the regularity, propriety or value-for-money with which the Department carries out its business
- notifying the Board of any significant issues which may impact on the Department's leadership, medium-term capability and significant risks to delivery of policy, along with mitigating actions taken
- disclosing all Ministerial Directions to the Board at the next meeting

4.8 The Chair should encourage all Board members to make full use of their skills and expertise in order to robustly challenge and thereby improve the standard of discussion in Board meetings.

Deputy Secretaries

4.9 The roles and responsibilities of the Deputy Secretaries are agreed with the Permanent Secretary. The business of the Department is managed through the Deputy Secretaries who are responsible for the development and implementation of policy and strategy and for the economic, efficient and effective management of resources allocated to them and their divisions. This includes taking steps to ensure that the business is prioritised and decisions are implemented in accordance with the strategic objectives set by the Board. Each Deputy Secretary is responsible for chairing a monthly Group Senior Management Team meeting.

4.10 Deputy Secretaries are also the main policy advisors to the Minister for their area of responsibility, subject to the overall direction of the Permanent Secretary. In practice these duties may be delegated to Directors at the discretion of the relevant Deputy Secretary.

Executive Board Members

- 4.11 In their role as Executive Board members, Deputy Secretaries have a particular responsibility for:
- advising the Board of any matters that threaten the regularity, propriety or value-for-money with which the Department carries out its business
 - notifying the Board of any significant risks or issues which may impact on service delivery or on the Department's reputation

4.12 The Board will not direct any of its Executive members (the Accounting Officer and the Deputy Secretaries) as to how their business areas should be run. It will generally act in an advisory capacity, offering advice to the Accounting Officer, but it will also exercise a challenge function. It is expected that this will be applied constructively. Executive members of the Board will give due regard to the advice of the Board in exercising strategic direction and control over the policy development and service delivery roles of their divisions.

Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning and Resources

4.13 All staff should ensure that expenditure commitments are made within approved budgets, are proper and regular, and

represent value for money. The Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning and Resources, as the most senior finance officer in the Department, has a particular responsibility in financial matters as set out in Managing Public Money NI. The responsibilities include:

- making recommendations to the Accounting Officer/Board about the allocation of resources to budget holders in line with strategic intention
- overseeing workforce planning and appropriate development and deployment of staff
- ensuring that the finance function has reviewed and signed off on business cases as appropriate
- leading the departmental response to the Executive's budget process, bidding for resources and defending existing baselines
- leading the corporate and annual business planning process
- providing financial support and advice to colleagues, but at the same time exercising a constructive challenge role regarding the economic, efficient and effective use of resources and ensuring policy and operational proposals with significant financial implications are signed off appropriately in line with the delegations

- providing financial advice to the Accounting Officer and the Minister across the full range of departmental activities
- managing the relationship with DoF and NIAO
- monitoring expenditure against Budget and vote
- Board level responsibility for Security, and Health and Safety

Directors

4.14 Directors, as heads of divisions acting within the scope of their delegated authority agreed with the relevant Deputy Secretary, and working within corporate internal control systems, are responsible for the strategic and operational management of their divisions. This includes the development and implementation of strategies and policies in their respective areas and for the management and deployment of resources placed at their disposal to deliver the agreed strategic agenda. They also have an important role in ensuring that their respective Deputy Secretary and (through them) the Accounting Officer and Minister are engaged appropriately on all sensitive; novel and contentious; and significant issues. In practice they may operate within a considerable degree of delegated authority, at the discretion of their Deputy

Secretary. Responsibilities of Directors and their key “deliverables” will be agreed annually through the Department’s Business Plan and reflected in their personal objectives agreed with their respective Deputy Secretaries. Directors are also responsible for the security of information/ data held within their division.

Non-Executive Board Members

4.15 The role of Non-Executive Board members includes:

- supporting the good corporate governance of the Department and contributing to decision making on corporate governance issues
- assisting and advising on the development of departmental business and strategic plans
- using their experience to challenge and support the Board, acting corporately
- monitoring and challenging the Department’s performance in relation to its objectives and commitments
- advising the Board on obtaining and considering all appropriate information
- advising the Board of any matters that threaten the regularity, propriety or value-for-money with which the Department carries out its business

- advising the Board of any significant risks or issues which may impact on service delivery or on the Department's reputation
- adding rigour to Board processes
- providing a safe sounding board for new approaches

4.16 In particular they should:

- provide an independent perspective on the monitoring of performance and progress of the Department, including the use of human and financial resources
- maintain a critical overview of the Department's financial controls and procedures for assessing and managing risk, drawing on their wider experience
- chair the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

4.17 The performance of Non-Executive Board Members is reviewed annually by the Permanent Secretary.

5. Internal Control and Risk Management

5.1 At the end of each financial year the Department's Annual Report and Accounts is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly in accordance with section 10(4) of the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001. On approval, the Annual

Report and Accounts is published under the Copyright Act 1911 and made available on the [Department's website](#).

Governance Statement

5.2 As part of the Annual Report and Accounts, the Accounting Officer is required to sign a Governance Statement. An effective governance framework, including a risk management process which involves a systematic approach to the evaluation and control of risk, is required to support this. The Governance Statement reflects the assessment of risk specific to the organisation and particularly highlights where risks materialised and the actions taken. New risks identified during the financial year are disclosed and information provided on how they are treated. Information is also included on how the Board assessed its performance and the outcome of the assessment.

Internal Audit

5.3 The Accounting Officer and the Board are independently advised by both an internal audit service operating in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, and the NIAO. The primary objective of Internal Audit is to provide the Permanent Secretary, in his capacity as Accounting Officer, the DARAC, and Management with an independent and objective opinion on risk management, control

and governance, by measuring and evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the Department's agreed objectives.

- 5.4 An annual report and opinion are provided by the Head of Internal Audit. The opinion is based upon an agreed audit strategy and informed by the outcomes of annual programmes of risk based internal audits and consultancy/advice and guidance reviews. The report is presented to the DARAC and formally issued to the Accounting Officer to help inform completion of the Governance Statement.

Northern Ireland Audit Office

- 5.5 As head of the NIAO, the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) has overall responsibility for the audit of the Department's resource accounts in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements, and with International Auditing Standards (UK and Ireland). The C&AG provides an opinion on whether the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, of the Department's affairs. The C&AG also forms an opinion on whether the expenditure and income have been applied to the purposes intended by the Assembly.

- 5.6 Representatives from the NIAO attend the DARAC meetings to discuss issues of regularity and propriety, the findings from the audit of the accounts and any significant Value for Money (VFM) issues.

Department of Finance

- 5.7 DoF takes the lead in coordinating Budget exercises and in-year monitoring rounds which provide all Departments the opportunity to review their spending plans, both in-year (through the three in-year monitoring rounds) or for the forward years (normally three years for the Budget process).
- 5.8 DoF Supply acts as the main conduit between the Department and the accounting staff (Accountability & Financial Management Division) and budgeting staff (Central Expenditure Division) in DoF. Supply colleagues also approve business cases submitted by the Department which are outside the departmental delegated limits. They also provide advice and guidance on all regularity and propriety issues.
- 5.9 Financial Management Division acts as the primary link between the Department and DoF Supply on departmental expenditure, capital issues and annually managed expenditure issues.

Risk Management

5.10 Risk management is the culture, process and structures that are directed towards the effective management of potential opportunities and threats facing an organisation in striving to meet its objectives. To assist in the process of identifying and managing risk, the Department has developed a Risk Management Framework which sets out the Department's approach to the identification and management of risk. The framework is consistent with recognised principles of sound risk management practice:

- appropriate oversight by senior management
- adequate risk management processes that provide for continuous risk monitoring by management
- the embedding of risk management into the activities of each business area as an integral part of the overall organisation
- comprehensive internal controls and assurance processes linked to key organisational risks

5.11 Risks can be managed at a number of levels, including corporate, group, divisional and branch/project levels. Asset Management and Governance Division is responsible for co-ordinating the risk management approach across the Department. This includes

acting as a liaison point for risk management for business areas and ensuring the regular updating of the Department's Corporate Risk Register.

5.12 The following key principles underpin the Department's approach to risk management:

- the Board, chaired by the Permanent Secretary, has overall responsibility for risk management within the Department
- key risks are identified against the Department's business objectives as an integral part of the business planning process
- each corporate risk is assigned to the appropriate Executive Board member who is responsible for ensuring that controls are in place at all levels to manage the risk
- all new business activities are assessed for key risks and controls put in place
- the Corporate Risk Register is reviewed at least quarterly to reflect changes in corporate risks including changes in risk status

Assurance Statements

5.13 Another key element of the system of internal control is the assurance statement process. This process requires each Grade 7, Grade 6 and Grade 5 to

complete a Certificate of Assurance each quarter. The Deputy Secretary will then provide a quarterly assurance statement to the Accounting Officer. These arrangements, which form part of the Department's integrated assurance process, provide the basis for the Accounting Officer to authorise the annual Governance Statement.

5.14 Assurance statements highlight any areas where there might be significant weaknesses in control or any irregularities in accounting practice. The following indicators, which are not exhaustive, are used to determine whether an issue is significant enough to be reported on in the Governance Statement:

- it prejudiced or prevented achievement of a departmental objective / key commitment
- it resulted in a need to seek additional funding from the Department / DoF or the significant diversion of resources from another business area
- the NIAO or Internal Audit would regard it as having a material impact on the audit opinion
- the DARAC advises it should be considered

5.15 ALBs for which DfC is responsible will provide assurance statements on a quarterly, tri-annual or bi-annual basis

to the Department which will be approved and signed by the CEO and Chair. The frequency of reporting will be determined by the risk rating of the relevant ALB.

Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Procedures

5.16 The Department is committed to openness, probity and accountability, and as such, it follows that there are Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Procedures in place to ensure that concerns about serious wrongdoing (eg financial malpractice, danger to the public or the environment, safety/ security breaches or possible unlawful conduct) can be raised through a clear reporting process. The procedures ensure that staff and members of the public can raise concerns quickly and in confidence, and that managers are aware of how to handle such concerns. Staff can access the procedures through the Department's intranet site and members of the public can access procedures via the [Department's website](#).

5.17 A Register of Concerns is maintained at departmental level in order to identify trends/patterns to ensure that individual cases are escalated as appropriate, to monitor the progression of enquiries and to keep senior management, the DARAC and the Board informed.

Register of Interests

5.18 The Department holds and maintains a Register of Interests for Senior Civil Servants which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. All staff are required to declare any personal or business interest which may, or may be perceived (by a reasonable member of the public) to influence their judgement. A Register of Departmental Management Board Interests is also compiled with interests published on the Department's website.

Register of Gifts and Hospitality

5.19 In accordance with NICS policy, Gifts and Hospitality registers are held and maintained across the Department which record any gifts and hospitality offered to and provided by DfC officials. A Gifts and Hospitality Register for the Department's Senior Civil Servants is placed on the Department's website.

Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs)

5.20 The Department is responsible for the following ALBs which sit outside its accounting boundary:

- Armagh Observatory & Planetarium
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
- Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland

- Libraries Northern Ireland
- Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (to be dissolved)
- National Museums Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Commissioner Children and Young People
- Northern Ireland Events Company (to be wound up)
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee
- Northern Ireland Museums Council
- North/South Language Body (which consists of two agencies – Foras na Gaelige and the Ulster-Scots Agency)
- Sport Northern Ireland
- Ulster Supported Employment Limited

5.21 The Department is also advised in the exercise of its functions by two statutory advisory bodies, the Historic Monuments Council and the Historic Buildings Council. Also in place is the Office of the Discretionary Support Commissioner, with the Commissioner an independent statutory office holder.

5.22 Further detail on ALBs, statutory advisory bodies and independent statutory officer holders is provided at [Annex E](#).

5.23 The Board's oversight of its ALBs is supported by Sponsor Teams including the appointed Senior Sponsor. The Board,

supported by the DARAC, ensures that there are robust governance arrangements in place with each ALB Board in order to promote high performance and safeguard propriety and regularity.

5.24 ALB governance arrangements include:

- Assurance Statements
- risk assessments
- Management Statements and Financial Memorandums
- accountability meetings which include discussions on the performance of the ALB
- fraud reporting requirements
- monitoring of internal and external audit recommendations
- periodic reporting of oversight arrangements to the DARAC

6. Other Governance Arrangements

6.1 There are also a number of other processes which contribute to key elements of corporate governance:

Governance Unit

- A Governance Unit for the provision of support on governance and risk management policy.

Business Planning Arrangements

- A central corporate and business planning process

which provides the Board with a mechanism by which it can:

- (a) regularly revisit and review the Department's strategic objectives for the medium to long term
 - (b) direct the resulting actions and goals which drive the Department's day to day business
- A quarterly monitoring and reporting process enables the Board to assess the effectiveness of its activities over the course of each year, promoting enhanced accountability and leadership within the Department.
 - The business planning process also facilitates linkages with the strategic outcomes of the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG).

HR and Performance Management

- HR policies designed to ensure the Department complies with employment law and has the appropriate numbers of staff with suitable skills to meet its objectives.
- A Performance Management System for reviewing and assessing the performance of individual members of staff. The Department uses the common NICS system for the management of individual staff performance through HR Connect.

Budgets and In-Year Monitoring Processes

- The Budget process, coordinated by DoF, gives Departments the opportunity to review spending plans, normally covering a three year period. This is done against the backdrop of the Executive's agreement of the priorities and actions in the PfG and the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- In-year monitoring provides a formal system for reviewing spending plans and priorities set for the financial year in light of more up to date information. The three monitoring rounds are usually conducted at June, October and January. DoF coordinate a provisional outturn exercise in May to compare outturn for the year to the final budget figure following the final monitoring round. A final outturn exercise is commissioned

in August to reconcile the Resource and Capital spend with the figures and the resource accounts.

Fraud Policy and Response Plan

- The DfC Fraud Policy details responsibilities regarding the prevention of fraud. A separate Fraud Response Plan specifies the procedures to be followed in the event of a fraud being detected or suspected. Both documents relate to fraud and loss within the Department and its sponsored bodies.
- Benefit Security Fraud and Compliance Operations deal with benefit fraud.
- Regular reporting and assurance on fraud and error is provided to the DARAC.

Information Risk Management and Cyber Security

- The Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) chairs the Departmental Information Assurance Committee which provides assurance to the Accounting Officer on information risk management and cyber security by way of an information assurance strategic action plan.
- A range of measures are in place to provide assurance that information security and cyber risk within the Department is effectively managed.

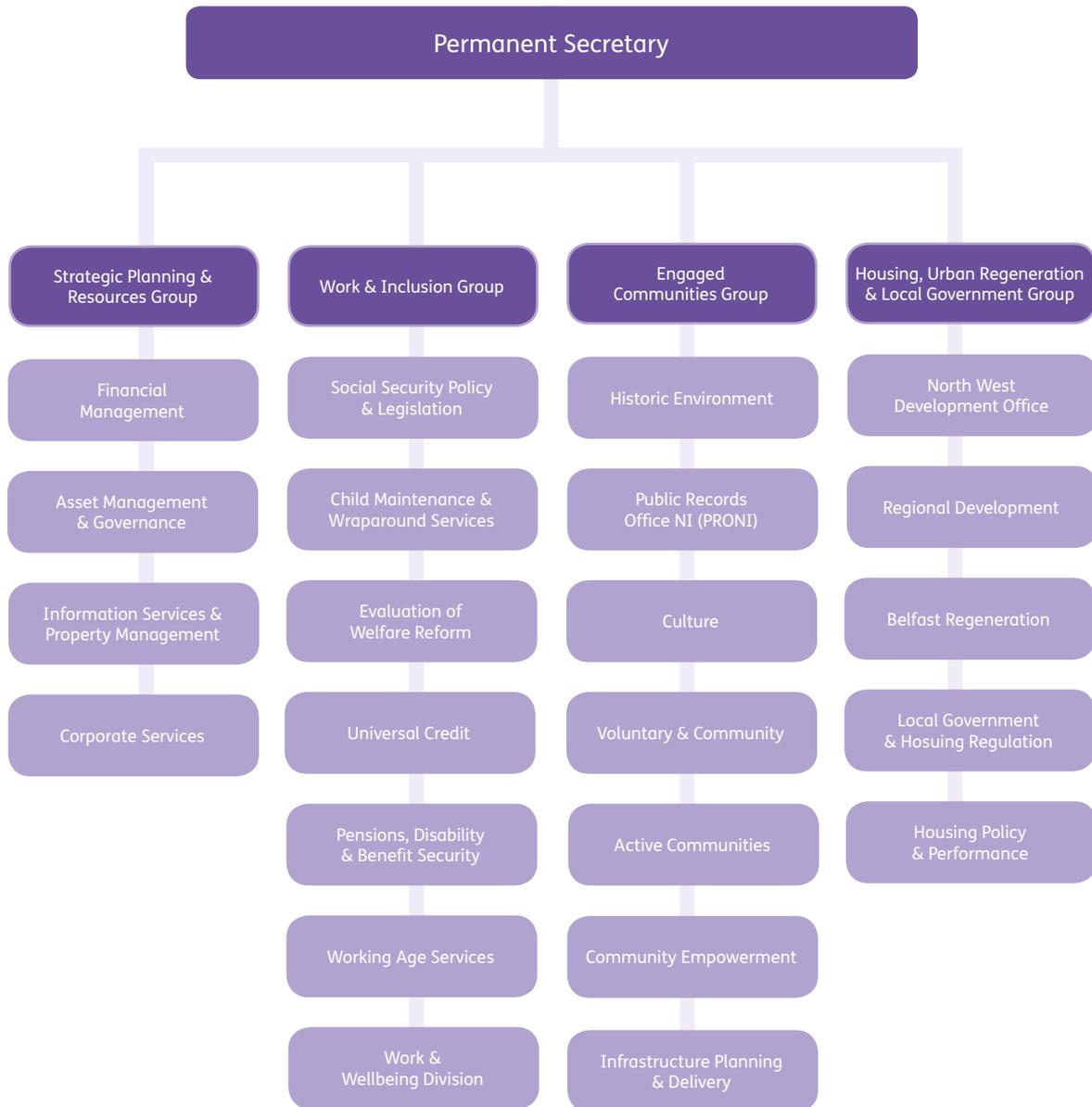
Regular Reporting from Sub-Committees

- Regular reporting and assurance on audit and risk from the DARAC.
- Regular reporting and assurance on information risk and cyber security from the DIAC.

7. Review

- 7.1 This Framework is intended to be a living document. It will therefore be kept under continuing review and approved by the Board on an annual basis.

DfC Senior Staff Structure



Departmental Management Board Operating Framework

1. Purpose

In order to support the Minister, the Permanent Secretary as Accounting Officer has established a Departmental Management Board (the Board)'. The Board supports, and where appropriate challenges, the Permanent Secretary in his oversight of the Department, including the Department's corporate governance arrangements. The Board itself is a core element of the Department's corporate governance framework, agreeing other elements and, through its scrutiny role, overseeing the policies, plans and effectiveness of those other elements. As policy is determined by the Minister, it is the Board's role to advise on policy only. The Board will discuss policy in the context of analysing options and setting and directing the strategic planning processes which ensures the delivery of Ministerial policy decisions and the operational management of their implementation.

2. Membership

The Board is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Department. The Board Chair is responsible for the appointment of all the Board members and the appraisal of

their performance through the Department's Performance Management system. The Board should have a balance of skills and experience appropriate to fulfilling its responsibilities. The membership of the Board should be balanced, diverse and manageable in size.

The other Executive members of the Board are:

- Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning and Resources
- Deputy Secretary Housing & Urban Regeneration
- Deputy Secretary Engaged Communities
- Deputy Secretary Work & Inclusion

There are also up to 2 Non-Executive Board Members.

The following also attend Board meetings:

- Director of Financial Management
- Director of Asset Management and Governance
- Director of Corporate Services

Other senior Departmental or NICS HR staff may be invited to attend for specific items.

The Permanent Secretary's Office will provide a Board secretariat. The secretariat will be responsible for ensuring compliance with Board procedures and recording any conflicts of interest declared at board meetings.

The secretariat will maintain an induction pack and programme for new members. All new members will receive appropriate induction in the Board's responsibilities and procedures.

3. Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Chair

The role of the Chair at Board meetings is to:

- facilitate Board meetings
- ensure that systems are in place to provide Board members with accurate and timely information of good quality to allow the Board to consider properly all matters before it
- ensure that a Board effectiveness review is performed annually, with independent input at least every three years, and that results are acted upon
- ensure Board adherence to the principles set out in **Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of Good Practice NI 2013**.

Responsibilities of Executive Board Members:

In undertaking their role, each executive member must:

- discharge the responsibilities of their particular post taking full account of

the interests of, and implications for, the remits of other Board members and the Department as a whole; and

- adopt a corporate approach in participating in all Board decisions and discussions, in particular those concerned with the development of strategic and business plans and the allocation of resources.

Responsibilities of Non-Executive Board Members

The primary role of the Non-Executive members is to contribute to the good governance of the Department. Non-Executive members should be prepared to offer constructive challenge with a view to ensuring that all aspects of strategy and delivery are scrutinised for effectiveness and efficiency.

In particular, responsibilities of the Non-Executive members should include:

- Participating fully in the formulation of business planning, strategy development and audit and risk management
- Participating fully in the process of monitoring the Department's progress towards meeting agreed objectives and targets

4. Objectives

The objective of the Board is to provide collective leadership for the Department through:

- **Strategic Clarity**

Setting the vision and/or mission and ensuring all activities, either directly or indirectly, contribute towards it; long-term capability and horizon scanning, ensuring strategic decisions are based on a collective understanding of policy issues; using outside perspective to ensure that Departments are challenged on the outcomes.
 - **Commercial Sense**

Approving the distribution of responsibilities; advising on sign-off of large operational projects or programmes; ensuring sound financial management; scrutinising the allocation of financial and human resources to achieve the plan; ensuring organisational design supports attaining strategic objectives; setting the Department's risk appetite and ensuring controls are in place to manage risk; evaluation of the Board and its members, and succession planning.
 - **Skills Development**

Ensuring the Department has the capability to deliver and has plans to meet current and future needs.
 - **Results Focus**

Agreeing the operational Business Plan, including strategic aims and objectives; monitoring and steering performance against plan; scrutinising performance of sponsored bodies through sponsor arrangements; and setting the Department's standards and values.
 - **Management Information**

Ensuring clear, consistent, comparable performance information is used to drive improvements.
- In order to achieve these objectives, a formal schedule of matters always dealt with by the Board – that is, those which should not be delegated within the Department – is maintained. This covers decision-making in relation to the following matters:
- setting the strategic direction for the Department through Business Plans to achieve Ministerial objectives and NICS Work Programme commitments
 - agreeing and promoting the Department's vision and values
 - financial planning and management, including allocation of resources to match delivery requirements and in-year monitoring and management of expenditure
 - monitoring departmental performance against objectives and targets and assessing the risks to delivery
 - monitoring overall financial position of the Department
 - monitoring progress against PfG commitments
-

- risk management policies, registers, and the risk appetite of the Department
- finance, human resources and IT strategies affecting long term capability of the Department
- budget allocation
- corporate governance arrangements within the Department and its ALBs
- scrutiny of performance of sponsored bodies through established sponsor arrangements

5. Matters reserved for the Board

The Board is responsible for approving the Department's:

- annual Business Plan
- Budget and any amendments
- risk management framework, including Risk Appetite
- Workforce Plan and People Strategy
- Corporate Governance Framework
- Terms of Reference for sub-committees
- health & safety and accommodation strategies and action plans
- Asset Management Strategy
- Learning and Development Plan and consideration of the learning and development annual report

The Board expects to receive reports on significant matters delegated to Directors on performance against internal targets and commitments including:

- progress on delivery of HR and IT Strategies and plans
- Freedom of Information
- Equality Unit progress
- legislation
- corporate social responsibility
- use of consultants
- update on key activities and developments on fraud
- emergency planning arrangements
- progress on delivery of Department's procurement plans

The main categories of information considered at Board meetings include:

- progress against Business Plan targets
- progress and status of significant projects
- performance against key efficiency metrics
- risk management
- management information relating to use of resources compared to budgets

6. Rights

The Board may:

- invite other staff or individuals to attend the Board as deputies, observers or to present a paper
- co-opt additional members to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience
- procure specialist ad hoc advice.

7. Meetings

The Board will normally meet monthly and an agenda and papers will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting. The Board maintains a work programme which is developed on a rolling basis. It includes matters always dealt with by the Board; matters that are delegated but where the Board expects to receive reports for approval or decision as necessary; and the usual governance, expenditure, risk management and performance reports.

A minimum of four members must be present for the Board to be deemed quorate. Attendance of core membership is important but in exceptional circumstances deputies may attend with prior approval of the Chair. Deputies should have full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member.

Members should attend Board meetings and sub-committee meetings regularly, attend events when required and contribute to discussions. Decisions should be taken both corporately and objectively, acting in the public interest in keeping with the Nolan principles of public life.

Where members have concerns about the running of the Department or a proposed action which cannot be resolved, they should ensure that these are recorded in the minutes.

8. Conduct

When discussing issues that affect the whole Department, each member of the Board has a responsibility to act in the best interests of the Department as a whole.

Members will be expected to take a corporate view of issues ahead of their specific business area interests, insofar as this is not inconsistent with Accounting Officer responsibilities, to rigorously examine and challenge all corporate issues before the Board and to do so in a constructive way.

Independent members will:

- provide constructive challenge across the Board's business
- provide a fresh, objective perspective and new ideas
- seek to add rigor to Board processes

- bring their specific expertise and experience to Board discussions.

Board members show leadership by promoting agreed values and standards and by applying the principles of public life as set out in Annex F. They act as role models for others within the organisation in terms of standards of personal behaviour.

9. Register of Interest

Board members are responsible for advising the secretariat of any external interests which may conflict with Board business. A Register of Board Interests is held by the Governance Unit and Board members should be familiar with arrangements for declaring interests.

The Board considers any conflict of interest with Board business at the start of each Board meeting:

- the member with such an interest will explain the nature of the interest
- the Board will determine if a conflict does or may exist and if so in what circumstances
- the Board will agree on how the Board member's contribution to the departmental matter should be handled (e.g. by not contributing to the decision in question or removing themselves for this part of the agenda). This will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting

10. Gifts and Hospitality

Board members are required to hold and maintain a Register of Gifts and Hospitality to record any offers in accordance with current NICS policy.

11. Minutes of Meetings

The business conducted at the Board, and actions required, are recorded in minutes prepared by the Permanent Secretary's Office. The formal minutes will be posted on the [Department's website](#).

12. Written Papers

Exceptionally (e.g. where a Board-approved response to a request is required by a deadline which precedes the next Board meeting), a paper may be distributed by the Board Secretariat to Board members for agreement by 'correspondence'. The content need not be further discussed, but will be formally ratified at the next Board meeting.

13. Sub-Committees

The Board may establish sub-committees to oversee and/or provide advice to the Board on specific areas of work. The chairmanship and Terms of Reference of such sub-committees are established by the Board. Sub-committees can be either time-bound or permanent, depending on the nature of the work. The Department has

the following permanent sub-committees:

- **Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee** - this operates in accordance with DoF guidance and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Handbook (NI). The Committee should be chaired by a Non-Executive Board Member, with at least one committee member having recent and relevant financial experience. The Committee, on behalf of the Departmental Management Board will review, prior to publication, the draft Department's Annual Report and Accounts, including the Governance Statement. Terms of Reference are attached at [Annex C](#).
- **Departmental Information Assurance Committee** - this Committee will be chaired by the Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning & Resources and will be attended by Information Asset Owners. Terms of Reference are attached at [Annex D](#).

14. Reporting

The DARAC and DIAC will report regularly to the Board on their work and will provide copies of their minutes.

15. Arm's Length Bodies

The Board defines the relationship of the Department with each of its ALBs, including strategic decisions relating to:

- establishment
- status
- structure
- change of status
- changes of scope
- mergers
- reviews

The Board is responsible for ensuring oversight of each of its ALBs through suitable sponsorship arrangements. Details of ALBs are attached at [Annex E](#).

16. Review/Evaluation

The Board Operating Framework will be kept under continuous review and will be formally updated and approved by the Board on an annual basis.

The Board will conduct an annual evaluation of its performance with independent input at least every three years. This will include a review of the mix and balance of skills and understanding of Board members to ensure they remain appropriate. The Board will ensure that the results from annual performance reviews are acted upon.

Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Departmental Management Board (the Board) has established an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to support it in its responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance across the Department. It does so by reviewing the comprehensiveness of assurances in meeting the Board and Accounting Officer's assurance needs and reviewing the reliability and integrity of these assurances. It has no executive powers.

2. Membership

- The Departmental Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (DARAC) consists of up to 2 Non-Executive Board Members, one of whom will serve as Chair and one of whom will serve as Deputy Chair, and up to 3 Independent Members. The membership is:
- John West (Non-Executive Member) – Chair
- Duncan McCausland (Non-Executive Member) – Deputy Chair
- Caroline Gillan (Independent Member)
- Seamus Wade (Independent Member)

- Other attendees are:
- Accounting Officer (Permanent Secretary)
- Deputy Secretary for Strategic Planning and Resources
- Director of Financial Management
- Director of Asset Management and Governance
- Head of Governance
- Head of Internal Audit
- NIAO representatives
- Other Deputy Secretaries may be invited to attend for items relating to their business area. In addition each Deputy Secretary will be scheduled to attend DARAC meetings across the year to discuss key risks in their operational areas.
- The Committee will be provided with a secretariat function from the Governance Unit.

3. Responsibilities

The Committee will review assurances and advise the Board and Accounting Officer on:

- the strategic processes for risk, control and governance and the Governance Statement

- the accounting policies, accounts, and Annual Report of the Department, including the process for review of the accounts prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and management’s letter of representation to external auditors
- the planned activity and results of both internal and external audit in relation to the Department, ALBs and other sponsored bodies (including NIAO reports and VFM studies)
- adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including Reports to Those Charged with Governance
- assurances relating to the management of risk and corporate governance requirements for the Department
- fraud, raising concerns (whistleblowing), declaration of interests, gifts and hospitality policies
- arrangements for special investigations

The Committee will also review its own effectiveness on an annual basis and report the results of that review to the Board.

4. Rights

The Committee may:

- co-opt additional members for a period not exceeding a year to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience; and

- procure specialist ad hoc advice at the expense of the Department, subject to budgets agreed by the Board.

5. Access

The Head of Internal Audit and the representative of External Audit will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the Committee. The Chair will meet at least annually with the Head of Internal Audit and Director of NIAO. The Chair also has access to officials to discuss issues of concern at any time throughout the year.

6. Meetings

- The Committee will meet at least four times a year. The Chair may convene additional meetings as deemed necessary
- a minimum of three members of the Committee must be present for the Committee to be deemed quorate
- the Committee may ask officials of the Department to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter
- the Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend and who are not members to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters
- the Board or the Accounting Officer may ask the Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee’s advice

7. Information Requirements

5 working days before each meeting the Committee will be provided with:

- A report summarising any significant changes to the Department's Corporate Risk Register
- A progress report from the Head of Internal Audit summarising –
- work performed (and a comparison with work planned)
- key issues emerging from Internal Audit work
- management response to audit recommendations
- changes to the Periodic Plan
- any resourcing issues affecting the delivery of Internal Audit objectives
- A progress report from the NIAO summarising work done and emerging findings

As and when appropriate the Committee will also be provided with:

- proposals for the Terms of Reference of Internal Audit
- the Internal Audit Strategy and update against plans
- the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion and Report
- quality assurance reports on the Internal Audit function
- the draft interim accounts and Annual Report & Accounts of the Department
- the draft Governance Statement

- summary of key information from Assurance Statements
- a report on any changes to accounting policies
- Reports to Those Charged with Governance
- a report on any proposals to tender for audit functions
- updates on Direct Award Contracts
- a report on co-operation between Internal Audit and external audit;
- the Department's Risk Management Framework
- ad-hoc papers on issues relating to risk management/ governance and/or internal control within the Department or its ALB's
- updates on fraud and Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing).

The above suggests minimum requirements for the information which should be provided to the Committee. Members will be provided with other documentation as required, for example, individual Internal Audit assignment reports, outcome of test drilling of business cases and Post Project Evaluation updates.

The Committee secretariat will prepare an annual programme of work to reflect above.

8. Reporting

- The Committee will formally report in writing to the Board and Accounting Officer after each meeting.

- The Committee will provide the Board and Accounting Officer with an Annual Report, timed to support finalisation of the accounts and the Governance Statement, summarising its conclusions from the work it has done during the year
- understanding of any relevant legislation or other rules governing the Department
- broad understanding of the government environment, particularly accountability structures and current major initiatives.

9. Register of Interests

Members will alert the Chair and/or Secretariat of any issues on which they might have a conflict of interest. This will be recorded by the Secretariat and the Register of Interests updated. The Committee as a whole should consider how matters on which a member may have a conflict of interest will be handled.

10. Competency Framework

All members of the Committee should have, or acquire as soon as possible after appointment:

- understanding of the objectives of the Department and current significant issues
- understanding of the Department's structure, including key relationships such as that with ALBs and North/South Bodies
- understanding of the Department's culture

The Committee should corporately possess knowledge / skills / experience (as appropriate and required) in:

- accounting
- risk management
- audit
- technical or specialist issues pertinent to the Department's business
- experience of managing similar sized organisations
- understanding of the wider relevant environments in which the Department operates
- detailed understanding of the government environment and accountability structures

11. Review

These Terms of Reference will be kept under continuous review and will be formally updated annually for the Board's approval.

Departmental Information Assurance Committee Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

Information assurance is the practice of managing risks related to the use, processing, storage, sharing and transmission of information or data and the systems and processes used for those purposes.

It is essential for the Department to take a strategic approach to the management, use and security of information in such a way as to protect its integrity. This is critical for the efficient and effective conduct of the work of the Department, and to provide the public with the confidence that we can be trusted with their personal data. This requires a sound governance regime supported by appropriate strategies, guiding principles, common frameworks, suitable structures, agreed processes and good practice.

The DIAC established under the Strategic Information Assurance Framework will strengthen our approach to the management and security of information and supporting technology. The DIAC will assist the Accounting Officer and Departmental Management Board in overseeing and carrying out their responsibilities for the effective and secure use of data in support of the aims of the Department.

2. Responsibilities

- Identify ,monitor and provide advice on the management of departmental information and security risks including cyber and physical environment risks
- Quarterly progress reports on accreditation of Departmental systems
- Promote adherence to GDPR principles, monitor and make recommendations to ensure compliance
- Oversight of all Departmental information assurance issues
- Ensure good information and governance principles and policies are adhered to across the Department
- Promote best practice

3. Membership

DIAC will be chaired by Departmental Senior Information Responsible Officer (SIRO). Membership of the Committee will consist of the following:

- Departmental Security Officer (DSO)
- Departmental Information Manager (DIM)
- Information Technology Security Officer (ITSO)
- Departmental Accreditor
- Head of Internal Audit
- Departmental Head of Technology
- Relevant Information Asset Owners as directed by SIRO
- Head of Analytical Services
- Data Protection Officer (DPO)

In addition to the above, other Information Asset Owners would attend by invitation as required.

The Committee may establish sub-groups on data security, as it considers appropriate. The use of deputies is at the discretion of the core committee members. Deputies should have full delegated authority to make decisions and approve documentation on behalf of the appropriate member.

4. Meeting Protocol

- Frequency – In order to align with quarterly Departmental Management Board, DIAC should meet approximately 2 weeks in advance of each quarterly DMB to allow for an update on progress against the Action Plan progress and production of an assurance report.
- Agenda Management – The agenda and secretariat for DIAC will be managed by Information Management Branch.

The papers for DIAC will be issued to all attendees at least five working days prior to all meetings.

5. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually in line with the review of the Strategic Information Assurance Framework.

Arm's Length Bodies, Statutory Advisory Bodies and Independent Statutory Office Holders

ARM'S LENGTH BODIES

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium

The Armagh Observatory and Planetarium was set up under the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (NI) Order 1995 and, under the Companies (NI) Order 1986 ("The Order").

It is registered as a company limited by guarantee and has charitable status. Its purpose is to advance the knowledge and understanding of astronomy and related sciences through the execution, promotion and dissemination of astronomical research nationally and internationally in order to enrich the intellectual, economic, social and cultural life of the community.

Arts Council Northern Ireland

The Arts Council is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established under the Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 which established the functions of the Arts Council as follows:

- a) to develop and improve the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts
- b) to increase public access to and participation in the arts

- c) to advise the Department and other government departments, district councils and other bodies on matters relating to the arts
- d) such other functions as are conferred on the Council by any other statutory provision

Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was established in June 2009 under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. The main objectives of this Act are to provide an integrated system of registration and regulation of charities in Northern Ireland, and supervision and support of registered charities.

Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland (COPNI)

COPNI was established under the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The COPNI has promotional, advisory, educational and general investigatory powers and duties. It champions the rights and interests of older people throughout Northern Ireland.

Libraries Northern Ireland (Libraries NI)

Libraries NI was established under The Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. The primary duty of Libraries NI is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland. In doing so the organisation ensures that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, library materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements of adults and children whilst:

- encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service
- providing advice as to the use of the library service and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using the service
- promoting literacy and lifelong learning
- maintaining a collection of library materials relevant to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland
- making library premises available for cultural and community activities
- meeting any special requirements of adults and children by any appropriate means

Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland

The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland was established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Its powers were later extended under the 1976 and 1981 Northern Ireland

Housing Orders and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1992. In general, the terms of reference for the Commission are to exercise 'general oversight of matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers of councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and of making recommendations to councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on such matters.' The NI Executive agreed that the Local Government Staff Commission should be wound up on 31 March 2017 however, this timetable was not achievable. The intention now is to dissolve it as soon as the consultation process and Assembly process on the Dissolution Order allows.

National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI)

NMNI was established under the Museums and Galleries (NI) Order 1998 which established the functions of NMNI as follows:

- to care for, preserve and add to the Collections
- ensure that the Collections are available to the public through exhibitions, effective interpretation, research and study
- promote the awareness, appreciation and understanding of
 - art history and science
 - the way of life and traditions of people

with particular reference to the Museums and Galleries (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC)

NIMC is a company limited by guarantee. It is also a registered charity meaning that it must comply with the 'Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)' as well as the additional requirements of the Financial Reporting Manual (FRM). Its purpose is to support regional and local museums in Northern Ireland and maintain and improve the standards of collections' care and service to the public. It also aims to promote a coherent framework of museums provision.

Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC)

NILGOSC is an NDPB sponsored by the Department, which was established on 1 April 1950 by the Local Government (Superannuation) Act to administer and maintain a fund providing pension benefits for employees of local authorities and other admitted bodies. The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Northern Ireland is managed by NILGOSC.

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)

NICCY is an NDPB sponsored by the Department which was established in October 2003 under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) order 2003. NICCY's principal aim is to 'safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people' up to the age of 18 or up to 21 for those with a disability or who have experience of being in the care of the state.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)

NIHE is the regional strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland. For national Accounts purposes NIHE was historically classified as a public corporation. From 1 April 2014, following a request from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), this classification changed. For National Accounts purposes, the regional strategic functions of NIHE are now classified as an NDPB and the landlord functions carried out are classified as a quasi-corporation within the NDPB.

Sport Northern Ireland (SNI)

SNI was established under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986. It is the leading body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland. SNI is committed to ensuring that sport and physical recreation is accessible for everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, dependency, religious belief or community background.

Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)

USEL is a not for profit organisation which has both NDPB and charitable status. It is supported and funded by government. USEL was established in 1962 with the aim of providing supported paid employment for people with disabilities within its Belfast manufacturing base. USEL's vision is to be the best at assisting people with disabilities meet their employee aspirations. Each year it supports over 1500 people with disabilities in more than 750 companies to enter and sustain

employment through various employment programmes. Today the organisation spans the whole of the province with offices in Belfast, Londonderry, Portadown and Omagh.

Northern Ireland Events Company (NIEC)

NIEC was incorporated as a limited liability company in 1997 with a remit to support major events in Northern Ireland. The company was controlled by a Board of publically appointed Non- Executive Directors. Day to day operational management of NIEC was carried out by an executive management team, led by a Chief Executive, who was the designated Accounting Officer.

Following the failure of the company the Public Accounts Committee produced a report in February 2016 with the Memorandum of Reply presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly on 22 June 2016. All creditor claims against the company have been settled and the company will now be wound up.

North/South Language Body

In the Good Friday Agreement, it was stated that a North/South Implementation body be set up to promote both the Irish Language (Foras na Gaelige) and Ulster Scots Language (Ulster Scots Agency). Each of these agencies has its own board whose members together constitute the Board of the North/South Language Body.

Foras na Gaelige

Foras na Gaelige carries out all the designated responsibilities regarding the Irish language. This entails facilitating and encouraging the speaking and writing of Irish in the public and private arena in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand, in the context of part three of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

The staff of Bord na Gaeilge, An Gúm (Publishers) and An Coiste Téamaíochta (Terminology Committee) and their activities have all been transferred to the new body. Foras na Gaeilge is proud of its role in advising north and south of the border, as well as public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors in all matters relating to the Irish Language as well as the supportive projects it undertakes with grant –aiding bodies and groups throughout the island of Ireland.

Ulster-Scots Agency

The Ulster-Scots Agency or Tha Boord O Ulster Scotch has been given the legislative remit of the promotion of greater awareness and use of Ulster-Scots, both within Northern Ireland and throughout the Island. The aims of the Ulster-Scots Agency are

- to promote the study, conversation, development and use of Ulster-Scots as a living language
- to encourage and develop the full range of its attendant culture
- to promote an understanding of the history of the Ulster-Scots

The Agency is jointly funded by the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in the Republic of Ireland and is responsible to the North/South Ministerial Council. The Agency has its main office in Belfast with a regional office in Raphoe, Co Donegal.

STATUTORY ADVISORY BODIES

Historic Buildings Council

The Historic Buildings Council was established in 1974 under the provisions of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 updated most recently by the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

The council is made up of 15 members with a wide range of expertise and experience in architecture, architectural history, planning, industrial heritage, building conservation and structural engineering throughout Northern Ireland. Its role is to advise the Department on the listing and delisting of buildings, listed building consent, buildings preservation notices (spot listing), urgent works to preserve buildings, conservation areas and matters of industrial and defence heritage.

Historic Monuments Council (HMC)

HMC was first established in 1971 under the provisions of the Historic Monuments

(Northern Ireland) Act 1971. Its current authority is derived from the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (the Order). The council is made up of fifteen members who span a wide range of experience and expertise in matters concerning historic monuments and cultural heritage. The role of HMC is to advise the Department on, among other things, the management of monuments in state care, maritime archaeology, industrial and defence heritage and areas of significant archaeological interest within development plans.

INDEPENDENT STATUTORY OFFICE HOLDERS

The Office of the Discretionary Support Commissioner

The Office of the Discretionary Support Commissioner was established to deliver independent reviews of decisions made on Discretionary Support Loans and grants. It came into operation in November 2016, replacing the Office of the Social Commissioner when elements of the Social Fund ceased. The Discretionary Support Commissioner is an independent statutory office holder.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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