

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) - Summary Report of 2 August 2023 and 12 September 2023 meetings

INFO 23-09-01

Summary Report of 2 August 2023 meeting

The Committee considered the following item:

Assurance on Legality and Governance Process for the FSADOC Year 5 Extension

The paper detailed the governance process which was/is being followed in respect of the FSA Delivery of Official Controls (FSADOC) Year 5 extension and the advice received from legal counsel. ARAC members raised some clarification questions but were ultimately assured that any risks relating to the year 5 extension are being suitably mitigated.

Date of next meeting:

12 September 2023 11:00 -13:00

Summary Report of 12 September 2023 meeting

The Committee considered the following items:

Executive Update

The Director of People and Resources gave an update on the latest work and issues within the FSA. The Director of Operations gave two more detailed updates in respect of Food Chain Information and Collection and Communication of Inspection Results and Veterinary Resourcing. Detailed discussions took place with ARAC members challenging and making suggestions as to potential ways forward to mitigate the risks in both areas.

Risk Management Update

The Head of Planning and Performance introduced the quarterly risk update which included a summary of the latest developments in respect of risk management, the current corporate risks and mitigations (including a new risk to support the Spending Review preparations) and details on the current assurance mapping work. ARAC members challenged and asked for assurance over some of the specific risks.

Internal Audit Progress Report

The Head of Internal Audit presented her progress report detailing that the 23/24 audit plan is on track with one report finalised and two at draft report stage. The last two reports from 22/23 were finalised in June. The annual review and update of the internal audit manual and associated quality assurance and improvement programme had been completed. ARAC members raised some clarification queries which were satisfactorily responded to.

Regulatory Audit Progress Report

The Head of Delivery Assurance presented his progress report detailing the work that had been undertaken in respect of regularity audits. Several of the recommendations from the 2018 Ernst & Young review of the FSA audit function have now been fully implemented.

Conflicts of Interest

The Head of Standards and Reward introduced the paper. It was being received for the first time due to a new requirement from Cabinet Office that Senior Civil Servants declarations be scrutinised by ARAC. Members were content with the declarations and associated mitigations.

Information Security Update

The Head of Knowledge Information Management and Security introduced the paper which gave details of actions taken to strengthen existing controls to prevent a specific security risk which had been discussed at the June meeting. It also gave ARAC an overview of the process for Freedom of Information requests and actions being taken to consider whether the process can be further improved.

ARAC Effectiveness Review and Terms of Reference

ARAC members and standing attendees had completed a review of the effectiveness of ARAC utilising a self-assessment tool provided by NAO. Overall ARAC confirmed that they considered themselves to be meeting the standards or excelling. There were some areas that ARAC thought they could improve. These were in respect of range of skills, training and development, sustainability, assurance mapping and financial reporting. Suggested actions were agreed and will be taken forward.

In conjunction with the review of effectiveness, ARAC also reviewed their terms of reference (ToR). Overall, the ToR was considered to reflect best practice with a few changes to the ToR agreed to reflect all the information received by the committee.

Draft FSA Annual Report, Consolidated and Devolved Accounts

ARAC members were asked to feedback with some suggestions made. NAO are currently completing their audit and we are awaiting the outcome of the audit of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Date of next meeting:

28 November 2023 11:00 -13:00 – in person