

AUDIT & RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

Summary Report of 20 May 2021 meeting

The Committee had a shortened agenda, in line with ARACs across government, to reduce management time not only in attending, but also in preparing for the meeting. The ARAC considered only the annual report and accounts, as well as an update on information security.

Update on the annual report and accounts

The Committee was presented with six papers: an update paper, the draft Westminster Annual Report and Accounts; the Consolidated Accounts; the Wales Annual Accounts; the Northern Ireland Accounts and the Remuneration Report. A detailed review of the draft annual report and accounts had been undertaken by Committee members. Comments and suggested amendments were noted with minor changes to be made to the final annual report and accounts. The intention is to lay the Wales and Northern Ireland accounts before Parliamentary recess in July, with the Westminster and Consolidated FSA accounts in September, as they are dependent on a third party audit.

Members praised and thanked FSA and external audit teams involved in preparing the Annual Report and Accounts. Members commented that the accounts were well prepared and substantially complete despite the ongoing challenges relating to Covid-19.

Update on FSA response to NAO Report: Ensuring Food Safety and Standards

The Committee was updated on the actions taken to address the recommendations from the NAO report, published in June 2019. With the full support of the NAO Value for Money Director, all actions have been completed, or closed and future progress for each recommendation will be monitored using the appropriate governance and performance reporting.

Approvals

The Committee approved the Accounting Officer and ARAC Chair's governance declaration, the Committee's terms of reference and the Audit Assurance charter.

Information Papers

The Committee received the following papers, for information. Where these are draft papers, minor amendments may be made ahead of their approval at the next ARAC meeting on 9th June 2021:

- Annual Report to the FSA Board from the Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (draft)
- Head of Audit Assurance's Annual Report and Opinion 2020/21 (draft)
- Audit Assurance Progress Report
- Update on the Audit Assurance (EY) report implementation
- Data and Information Security update
- Corporate Risk Management Update
- ARAC meeting dates 2022

Dates of next meetings: 9th June 2021; 6th September 2021.

Summary Report of 9 June 2021 meeting

The Committee considered the following:

Review of the annual report and accounts

The Committee was presented with the annual reports and accounts for Westminster, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Consolidated FSA, for final review.

ARAC Members approved, on behalf of the FSA Board, for digital sign off by the Accounting Officer of the FSA Wales and FSA Northern Ireland annual reports and accounts. The NAO will perform their final review and submit for digital certification by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG). Publication and laying in Northern Ireland and Wales Assemblies, subsequent to C&AG's certification, is expected from 24th June and not later than 30th June.

ARAC Members also approved, on behalf of the FSA Board, for digital sign off by the Accounting Officer, the Westminster and Consolidated annual report and accounts. These, however, are subject to receipt and approval of third-party assurance on the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) audit. Once received, digital sign off by the FSA Accounting Officer will be requested, ahead of the NAO's final review and submission for digital certification by the C&AG. Publication and laying of the Westminster and Consolidated accounts, being dependent on a third-party audit, is likely to be delayed until late September.

Members praised the staff involved in the preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts, commented that all the reports and sets of accounts were well prepared, and that for a third consecutive year there were no audit recommendations in the Audit Completion Report. Members also complimented the collaboration between FSA and external audit staff having to work remotely, again, to deliver the audit.

Information Papers

The Committee received the following papers for information:

- Annual Report to the FSA Board from the Chair of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.
- Head of Audit Assurance Annual Report and Opinion 2020/21.
- Assurance Mapping Annual Report.

Key Action

The Annual Report and Accounts were recommended for approval by the FSA Board for signature by the Accounting Officer.

Dates of next meeting: 6th September 2021.