

Title of Meeting	Meeting of the Public Health Agency Governance and Audit Committee
Date	1 October 2020 at 10.00am
Venue	Fifth Floor Meeting Room, 12/22 Linenhall Street, Belfast

Present

- Mr Joseph Stewart - Chair
- Mr John Patrick Clayton - Non-Executive Director
- Ms Deepa Mann-Kler - Non-Executive Director

In Attendance

- Miss Rosemary Taylor - Assistant Director, Planning and Operational Services
- Mr Paul Cummings - Director of Finance, HSCB (*via video link*)
- Ms Jane Davidson - Head Accountant, HSCB (*via video link*)
- Mrs Catherine McKeown - Internal Audit, BSO (*via video link*)
- Ms Christine Hagan - ASM (*via video link*)
- Mr Roger McCance - NIAO (*via video link*)
- Mr Robert Graham - Secretariat
- Mr Darren Moan - Department of Health

Apologies

None

		Action
37/20	Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies	
37/20.1	Mr Stewart welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.	
38/20	Item 2 - Declaration of Interests	
38/20.1	Mr Stewart asked if anyone had interests to declare relevant to any items on the agenda. No interests were declared.	
39/20	Item 3 – Minutes of previous meeting held on 1 July 2020	
39/20.1	The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 1 July 2020 were approved as an accurate record of that meeting.	

40/20	Item 4 – Matters Arising
	<i>33.20/5 Procurement</i>
40/20.1	Mr Stewart said that a proposal regarding the establishment of a sub-Committee to the PHA Board looking at procurement had still to be considered, and will be raised at the next Board meeting.
	<i>33.20/7 Planning Staff</i>
40/20.2	In response to a query from Mr Stewart, Miss Taylor confirmed that the second senior planning manager has now taken up post.
41/20	Item 5 – Chair’s Business
41/20.1	Mr Stewart said that he had no Chair’s Business.
42/20	Item 6 – Internal Audit
	<i>Progress Report [GAC/17/10/20]</i>
42/20.1	Mrs McKeown presented the progress report and advised that the Financial Review audit is currently under way. She pointed out that the line indicating “Regional Orgs CAS Review” was an error and in fact related to Internal Audit’s offer of support during COVID-19, but that PHA had not taken up this offer. She informed members that the annual audit of Risk Management has recently been completed and is currently with management for comments, but that a satisfactory level of assurance had been given.
42/20.2	Members noted the Progress Report. <i>Mid-Year Follow up on IA outstanding recommendations 2020/21 [GAC/18/10/20]</i>
42/20.3	Mrs McKeown advised that of 65 outstanding recommendations, 45 had now been fully implemented with the remaining 20 partially implemented. She noted that the 20 recommendations partially implemented were spread across a range of audits. She highlighted that there were three outstanding recommendations from an audit of screening that was carried out in 2017 and four outstanding from an audit of the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme in 2019/20. She added that for approximately half of the recommendations, the delay in their implementation was due to factors relating to COVID-19 and the other half were from audits that had only recently been

	completed.	
42/20.4	Mr Clayton noted that there appeared to be some audits where there has not been progress in implementing recommendations and while some of this delay could be attributed to COVID-19, he pointed out that some of these were in audits that were conducted in previous years, for example procurement, and he said that this needed to be kept under review, particularly if there is a second wave.	
42/20.5	Ms Mann-Kler said that in relation to the outstanding actions in the population screening audit, some of relate to areas that PHA has control over, but a number depend on Trusts taking actions. She added that it is important the PHA progress those actions that are within their remit as soon as possible so that the required governance and quality assurance is in place; this will also help to mitigate as best as possible against any unintended consequences as a result of COVID-19. Mr Stewart expressed concern about the number of outstanding recommendations and felt that in not all of them could a delay in their implementation be attributed to COVID-19. He highlighted a recommendation in the screening audit where PHA is awaiting access to data from Trusts and said that the Trusts' non-completion of this is impacting on PHA.	
42/20.6	Miss Taylor acknowledged the comments made regarding COVID-19 and explained that many of the staff have been focusing on COVID-19 related work and have not had the opportunity to follow up, or provide a full report for the Internal Audit review. She noted that with regard to the R&D audit, there has been some progress, but she agreed to follow up with Dr Janice Bailie to get more detail on this. She assured members that the Screening team has been following up on some of the outstanding issues with Trusts. Mrs McKeown agreed with Miss Taylor's assessment that there has been some progress and while she acknowledged that the regional Screening Programme Board has been established, there remains an expectation that there should be an overarching framework. Mr Stewart said that there may be a rationale for asking the relevant Director to come along to the Committee and explain why there are delays.	Miss Taylor
42/20/7	Ms Mann-Kler asked how PHA is faring in terms of its implementation of recommendations compared to other HSC organisations. Mrs McKeown said that while she did not have the data to hand, she acknowledged that COVID-19 is having an impact across all organisations, but she hoped that by the year end, the percentage of recommendations that have been fully implemented will	

	have increased.	
42/20.8	Mr Stewart proposed that the recommendation emanating from the travel audit be closed, as PHA has taken this as far as they can, and the remaining element is outside of the PHA control. Members approved this proposal.	
42/20.9	Mr Stewart noted that many of the implementation dates are listed as February 2021 and he sought assurance as to how realistic this date is. Miss Taylor said that the date links to the next follow-up review. Mrs McKeown agreed to review the dates. Mr Stewart said that he would feel better informed if a recommendation was not going to be implemented until a later date that this more realistic date should be recorded, provided there was a rationale outlining why this was going to be the case. Mr Clayton agreed that having more realistic dates would be helpful.	Mrs McKeown
42/20.10	Members noted the Internal Audit Mid-Year Follow up Report. <i>IA Audit General Report 2019/20 [GAC/19/10/20]</i>	
42/20.11	Mrs McKeown presented the report which she said gave high level findings across the HSC. She advised that there had been a drop in the turnaround time in terms of issuing reports across the HSC. She explained that this was due to management responses being delayed because of issues such as COVID-19 and industrial action, as well as the volume of limited opinions which took longer for management to respond to.	
42/20.12	In terms of the range of assurances across the sector, Mrs McKeown advised that 69% were either satisfactory or partially satisfactory and limited with the remaining 31% being limited or unacceptable. She drew members' attention to a chart showing how these percentages compare over the last five years. She said that this showed a reduction in the number of satisfactory audits.	
42/20.13	Mrs McKeown said that the next section of the report looked at the areas where limited or unacceptable levels of assurance had been given. She added that the remainder of the report gave an analysis comparing different HSC organisations.	
42/20.14	Mr Stewart thanked Mrs McKeown for what he said was a comprehensive and interesting report. Ms Mann-Kler commented that this was report was useful from a corporate governance perspective and she was pleased to note that	

	whistleblowing is being looked at as she and Miss Taylor had recently met to discuss the recent guidance that had been issued by NIAO.	
42/20.15	Mr Clayton said that it was interesting to compare PHA's performance against other HSC bodies. He said that he was particularly interested in the trends relating to the decrease in audits with a satisfactory level of assurance and the increase in those audits with a limited or unacceptable level of assurance. He asked if it would be possible to get some further data on this relating specifically to PHA. Mrs McKeown agreed to compile this.	Mrs McKeown
42/20.16	Members noted the Internal Audit General Report.	
43/20	Item 7 – Finance	
	<i>Fraud Liaison Officer Update Report [GAC/20/10/20]</i>	
43/20.1	Mr Cummings advised members that there is one new case of suspected fraud which is a case that impacts across a number of Government departments. He said that the PSNI investigation remains ongoing.	
43/20.2	Mr Cummings advised that the National Fraud Initiative data matching exercise for 2020/21 will commence shortly. He said that the outcome of the 2018/19 exercise was also contained within the report.	
43/20.3	Mr Clayton asked about PHA's potential exposure with regard to the new suspected fraud case. He asked what the potential sum was. Ms Mann-Kler also asked about PHA's allocation to this group. Ms Davidson said that PHA's level of exposure is low compared to other funders and the contract is currently under review. She advised that Ms Lyn Benson in HSCB Finance is dealing with the case along with BSO Legal Services. Mr Cummings assured members that the issue relates to potential overfunding.	
43/20.4	Members noted the Fraud Liaison Officer Update Report.	
44/20	Item 8 – Corporate Governance	
	<i>Corporate Risk Register (as at 31 August 2020) [GAC/21/10/20]</i>	
44/20.1	Mr Stewart said that the Corporate Risk Register should be listed on the agenda as being "for approval". Miss Taylor agreed and said that following today's meeting the updated	

- Register will be brought to the October Board meeting.
- 44/20.2 Miss Taylor presented the Register and advised that this Register is for the period up to 31 August 2020 and that since the previous iteration, two new risks have been added, one relating to HSCQI funding, and one about PHA leadership. She added that one risk, relating to emergency planning, has had its rating reduced from “high” to “medium”.
- 44/20.3 Mr Stewart proposed that members go through each risk individually and pick up any issues.
- 44/20.4 Mr Stewart began with risk 26 relating to procurement. He noted the change in the review date and asked whether this was achievable. Miss Taylor advised that this is an ongoing area of risk, but advised that there is an ongoing review of the procurement plan.
- 44/20.5 On risk 39, relating to cyber security, Ms Mann-Kler noted that COVID-19 has placed an additional reliance on PHA’s IT systems and if extra measures or controls have been put in place from a security perspective. Miss Taylor advised that over the last couple of years there has been a lot of work undertaken across the HSC in terms of the strengthening the IT infrastructure and that any new developments are undertaken taking account of cyber security requirements. Ms Mann-Kler said that COVID-19 has presented a potential vulnerability so it is important that high standards are maintained.
- 44/20.6 Mr Clayton asked if the regional desktop exercise has been carried out. Miss Taylor advised that she had been unable to attend the last meeting of the Cyber Security Programme Board so she was uncertain of the timescales for undertaking it. She added that the IT and emergency planning staff have been diverted to COVID-19 work so they may not have been able to plan an exercise as yet.
- 44/20.7 In terms of emergency planning (risk 46), Mr Clayton noted that there had been an action relating to sharing the learning from the first wave of COVID-19 with further staff training to take place. However, he noted that this is due to be completed by December and suggested that this should be pushed forward given the second wave has potentially already commenced. Miss Taylor said that clarification was being sought from HR regarding payment issues and that this will be discussed at the regional HR Directors’ Group. In terms of the review dates, she said that actions are reviewed as part of the regular cycle. Mr Clayton reiterated that it seemed unusual to conduct an internal review at this

- time. Miss Taylor acknowledged that there are a lot of unknowns.
- 44/20.8 Mr Stewart said that for risk 47, relating to the PHA Intranet, he was concerned that there was not a fixed date for when the new Intranet will be rolled out. Miss Taylor said that she would speak to Mr Stephen Wilson concerning this. Mr Stewart asked if the issue lay with PHA or does it relate to the architecture of the site. Miss Taylor said that the main issue is capacity within both PHA and BSO ITS to carry out this work.
- 44/20.9 Ms Mann-Kler said that in relation to risk 48 concerning the PHA website, it is more important than ever that PHA has an effective website. She asked if the website is currently fit for purpose and when the business case for its redevelopment will be approved. Miss Taylor assured members that the website is being kept up to date and that PHA balances the information it presents with that that is available on the Department of Health website and on the NI Direct website. She advised that the approval of the business case lies with the Department of Health. She said that PHA is working with the digital team at the Department but its focus recently has been on the development of the digital components of the 'Test, Track and Protect' strategy (including the contact tracing information system and the proximity app). Ms Mann-Kler asked whether the business case makes reference to the fact that issue features on PHA's Corporate Risk Register and therefore should be prioritised. Miss Taylor said that it is unlikely that this has been referenced on the template that was submitted, but will have fed into the content of the business case. Ms Mann-Kler said that the website is a critical element of PHA's work and should be fit for purpose. Miss Taylor assured members that Mr Wilson is very keen to see the website developed.
- 44/20.10 Mr Clayton noted that the arrangements for the maintenance of the website sit outside PHA so there is an opportunity to improve this arrangement. He said that the PHA Board needs to understand what barriers there are given that a new procurement exercise may be required to be undertaken. He added that as there is a digital hub within the Department of Health, there is the opportunity to carry out a review and that their input would be welcome.
- 44/20.11 Mr Stewart moved onto risk 49 which concerns the allocation and expenditure of COVID-19 monies in advance of allocations being secured. He said that this was a particular issue not unique to PHA, but he was concerned as to how it would be viewed by the auditors as the Treasury

- Orange Book is very clear in this regard. He added that although business cases have been submitted, they may be approved but funding may not follow.
- 44/20.12 Mr McCance said that the auditors are conscious that these are unusual times and while there may not be the same level of paperwork and approvals, auditors would expect to see some form of paper trail to offer assurance that any approach taken has been a robust one. Mr Stewart asked if NIAO has issued any guidance in this area. Mr McCance said that no guidance has been issued but ultimately it is up to Accounting Officers. Mrs McKeown endorsed what Mr McCance said and agreed that internal audit would be seeking assurance that there is an audit trail.
- 44/20.13 Mr Cummings assured members that when the Gold/Silver/Bronze emergency planning arrangements were in place, HSCB completed a forensic review of every decision that was made and there are file notes detailing every request made and the expenditure that would be incurred. He added that since these arrangements were stood down, his staff are now reviewing the 155 business cases that have been submitted across the HSC for COVID-19 related expenditure. He advised that many of these business cases do not affect the PHA and will be forwarded to the new Regional Management Board for approval.
- 44/20.14 Mr Cummings advised that PHA is continuing to spend money with approximately 28 new staff taking up post in the contact tracing centre over the last week. He reiterated that prior to the end of the emergency planning arrangements, all financial matters had been handled properly, but added that the business cases were subject to change and he had not had complete sight of them all.
- 44/20.15 Ms Mann-Kler asked how many of the business cases apply to PHA and added that it would be helpful to understand the status of these business cases given this is a rapidly changing situation where costs are increasing. She cited that the original business case for contact tracing was based around 50 cases per day, but numbers are now sitting at around 350. Mr Cummings said that this would need to be raised directly with the Interim Chief Executive. Miss Taylor advised that one of her staff is involved in reviewing one of the business cases and factoring in the additional costs around staffing and accommodation. Mr Stewart said that based on the discussions, he would raise his concerns with the Interim Chief Executive.
- 44/20.16 Mr Stewart said that any issues relating to risk 50 on

	procurement during COVID-19 will have been picked up as part of the discussion on risk 49.	
44/20.17	Mr Stewart said that elements of risk 51 on contact tracing had also part of that earlier discussion. He asked why engagements with MLAs is identified as a control and if this related to helping people understand the system and getting accurate information out. Miss Taylor said that it is about getting confidence in the system and MLAs being able to put out key messages.	
44/20.18	Mr Stewart moved onto risk 52 relating to information governance. He noted that this risk covered areas such as remote working and data security. Miss Taylor advised that this risk also relates to the contact tracing service and ensuring that there are Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for different elements of that programme. She added that there has been extensive engagement with the Information Commissioner's office regarding these and she would be happy to share these with members. In terms of remote access and working from home, she said that PHA is aware of the potential issues so information was shared with all staff about IT security and data security and this is re-issued periodically. She assured members that there are adequate physical security arrangements for the contact tracing centre as it is located in County Hall and staff entering the building do so via the front desk reception and security. She added that all of the contact tracing information is held on a secure system. Mr Clayton asked who is responsible for this system. Miss Taylor explained that BSO ITS are involved and there is also a link with the digital team at the Department of Health. Miss Taylor agreed to share the DPIA for the Contact Tracing Service.	Miss Taylor
44/20.19	Mr Stewart said that he had no issues to raise on risk 53 which concerns corporate priorities.	
44/20.20	Mr Stewart noted that matters concerning risk 54 on the ability of third parties to deliver commissioned services had been covered earlier in the meeting.	
44/20.21	Mr Stewart moved onto risk 55 relating to public health staffing issues and noted that actions are being taken. Mr Clayton asked why there was a particular focus on this directorate rather than across the organisation as a whole. He noted that there have been developments within the public health directorate but he was concerned there could be gaps in other teams. He added that with the instruction that people should work from home if they can, he sought assurance that PHA could function over the winter months.	

	<p>Miss Taylor advised that originally this risk had covered the PHA as a whole, but when it was reviewed in June, it was felt that the remaining high risk issues were in public health, and particularly within the health protection team. She added that another area where COVID-19 is having an impact is in the communications team so a business case has been submitted to the Department of Health for additional resources for that team. Mr Clayton noted that there has been a sustained period of 7-day working and issues with staff being able to take leave. He noted the focus on the public health directorate but felt that these issues related to the organisation as a whole. Miss Taylor agreed that resilience will be an issue going forward. Mr Stewart suggested that this should to be discussed by the Executive Team. Miss Taylor agreed that an additional risk could possibly be added regarding this.</p>	Miss Taylor
44/20.22	<p>Mr Stewart moved onto the new risks and began with risk 56 relating to HSCQI. He felt that there was too much narrative and that the focus of the risk should be on the fact that PHA took on the functions of HSCQI without funding.</p>	
44/20.23	<p>Mr Stewart noted that the narrative in risk 57 relating to PHA leadership should now include that the Director of Public Health will be retiring in December. He asked if members were content with how the risk is presented. Mr Clayton said that he was pleased that this risk is now included as it will be one of the main issues facing the PHA Board over the coming months. Ms Mann-Kler said that it was clearly worded, but she noted that one of the areas highlighted in the recent Muckamore review was the lack of continuity in the leadership team and therefore this risk concerned her greatly. She added that PHA is facing one of the most challenging periods it has ever faced and this has coincided with many changes at Executive level and there remains no clarity with regard to the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive. She noted that the Director of Public Health is due to retire and there has been no update on any interim arrangements yet. Mr Stewart said that he was pleased that this risk was now on the Register but added that the PHA Chair should be asked to write to the Permanent Secretary outlining the risks to the Agency at present and the need to get posts filled at senior level on a permanent basis. Mr Clayton agreed that would be a welcome step.</p>	
44/20.24	<p>Mr Stewart suggested that there may be a risk for PHA in terms of its ability to deliver on its statutory functions in light of the proposed changes to the HSC Framework. Mr Clayton said that he had intended to raise this as he has concerns not only about PHA's ability to discharge its</p>	

functions, but also as to what those functions are. He also expressed concern that the PHA Chair has not received a response to the letter he wrote to the Permanent Secretary on this matter in July 2020. Ms Mann-Kler echoed Mr Clayton's views regarding the letter and said that, particularly in the time of a pandemic, PHA should not be in a situation where there is a lack of clarity about its responsibilities and how these are discharged. She asked whether this issue has been flagged up by other HSC bodies. Mr Cummings said that he was aware that the Non-Executives Directors of HSCB had similar concerns and had not yet received a response to their letters on the matter. He suggested that the PHA Chair should use a forum where there are other HSC Chairs in order to raise this matter as he thought that there had been discussions on this previously.

- 44/20.25 Mr Stewart noted that in addition to the Corporate Risk Register, members had received a copy of the Operations Directorate Risk Register.
- 44/20.26 Miss Taylor advised that the directorate register contained a risk on web hosting which had previously featured on the Corporate Risk Register but had been de-escalated. She said that two new risks had been added, one about increasing demands on ICT and the other around the capacity of the information governance team given its increased workload at this time.
- 44/20.27 Mr Stewart asked whether there had been any assistance offered from the HSC Leadership Centre in terms of resources or internships given the pressures on PHA staff. Miss Taylor advised that some staff had come in to provide additional support in relation to project management. She added that in terms of information governance, approval had been given for a temporary appointment and that following a recruitment exercise an individual has been appointed, but a start date is not yet known. Mr Clayton sought clarity on the reference to internships. Miss Taylor said that in the light of recent recruitment exercises PHA was not likely to need to approach the Leadership Centre for additional support for information governance. With regard to interns, she explained that consideration had been given to offering position to interns who had recently finished their internship within the HSC, but again this may no longer need to be considered.
- 44/20.28 Mr Stewart commented that it would be useful to review the directorate risk registers going forward in order to give the Committee assurance that risk is being taken seriously

- across the organisation.
- 44/20.29 Members **APPROVED** the Corporate Risk Register.
- 45/20 Item 9 – Information Governance Verbal Update**
- 45/20.1 Miss Taylor advised that there has been an increase in the number of FOI requests being submitted to the PHA with a total of 62 requests for the period from 1 April to 20 September, compared to 22 for the same period last year. She added that 60% of the requests are COVID-19 related. Mr Stewart noted that even if the requests do not relate to the work of the PHA there is still a requirement to respond to them. Miss Taylor added that many of the staff who need to provide the responses to the FOIs are fully immersed in COVID 19 work, resulting in slower turnaround times.
- 45/20.2 Ms Mann-Kler asked if the requests tend to be repetitive. Miss Taylor said that there may be similarities, but rarely would be exactly the same; additionally some of the queries can be quite complex and require legal assistance. Ms Mann-Kler asked what areas are covered by the requests and if they relate to people not being able to source specific information. Miss Taylor advised that queries can relate to nursing homes, care homes, testing, but also about decisions that have been made. Ms Mann-Kler asked if the queries provide a useful insight into areas where there are potentially gaps in terms in information that is being communicated to the public. Miss Taylor said that this may apply in some cases, but in many cases the requests are detailed and are seeking a lot of information, some of which may be personally identifiable, which could not be shared, and require input from the governance team to consider the relevant FOI exemptions.
- 45/20.3 Mr Clayton asked if these requests are separate from press queries. Miss Taylor advised that press queries are dealt with through a separate process, however some press queries may come in as FOIs. Mr Clayton asked if particular types of queries could be headed off. Miss Taylor said that Mr Stephen Wilson's team does maintain an open dialogue with media outlets.
- 45/20.4 Miss Taylor highlighted other information governance work, including work on the DPIAs relating to different elements of the contact tracing programme. She said that there have been weekly meetings with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) regarding these. She added that a number of Data Sharing Agreements, Data Access Agreements and a Section 255 agreement regarding the transfer of national

- testing data from England to Northern Ireland have had to be put in place.
- 45/20.5 Miss Taylor said that in terms of non-COVID-19 related activity, there has been ongoing work in areas such as contracts, screening and the Lifeline service.
- 45/20.6 Miss Taylor informed members that PHA was alerted to a data breach in relation to a report published on Muckamore. She said that the Department of Health had advised PHA and HSCB that one of the appendices of the report contained initials of 12 individuals. She explained that although the Department of Health had commissioned the report and published it, it required the PHA and HSCB to report the breach also, given their role in commissioning the review (at the direction of the Department). She said that a joint review was initiated by PHA and HSCB and following this, the ICO had written to advise that it would be taking no further action as a review was taking place to share the learning from this. She added that families of the individuals concerned had been contacted by the Belfast Trust and given the opportunity to share any concerns with the Chair of the independent panel that had produced the report. She explained that the staff involved had been working through an agency so PHA and HSCB are working with the Belfast Trust to see if these staff can be contacted through the agency.
- 45/20.7 Members noted the update on information governance.
- 46/20 Item 10 – External Auditor’s final Report to those charged with Governance 2020/21 [GAC/22/10/20]**
- 46/20.1 Mr McCance advised that the final version of the Report was unchanged from the draft version which members had seen previously. He reiterated that the Comptroller and Auditor General had certified the accounts with an unqualified audit opinion, and that there were no Priority 1, 2 or 3 recommendations.
- 46/20.2 Mr Stewart said that he was delighted to receive a clean report and he thanked everyone for their work to achieve this outcome.
- 46/20.3 Members noted the final Report to those Charged with Governance.

47/20	Item 11 – PHA Mid-Year Assurance Statement [GAC/23/10/20]
47/20.1	Miss Taylor explained that the Mid-Year Assurance Statement follows a set template and remains a “work in progress” until it is signed off by the Interim Chief Executive. She noted that the Statement confirms that the Corporate Risk Register and ALB Self-Assessment will be brought to the next PHA Board meeting. She advised that there are two new divergences, one relating to HSCQI funding and the other relating to staff resilience during COVID-19. She added that the remaining divergences are those brought forward from the previous statement, and updated as appropriate.
47/20.2	Miss Taylor noted that PHA has not yet received the Mid-Year assurance from Internal Audit, but she anticipated that this would be received before the Board meeting. Mrs McKeown confirmed that this will be the case.
47/20.3	Mr Stewart said that the Statement was comprehensive and he was pleased to see the divergences noted. Mr Clayton asked about staff resilience and the potential for a return to 7-day working during a second wave. He asked what measures were being put in place to mitigate that. He said that although the risk is articulated well, it should be stated that this is not normal practice. However, he was sure that this was being reviewed by the Executive Team. Mr Stewart felt that what was articulated in the Statement was sufficient for the purpose of the Mid-Year Assurance Statement. Mr Clayton suggested it should be included in the Corporate Risk Register as it has been identified as an issue.
47/20.4	Members APPROVED the Mid-Year Assurance Statement which will be brought to the PHA Board on 15 October.
48/20	Item 12 – Draft GAC Audit Committee Self-Assessment [GAC/24/10/20]
48/20.1	Mr Stewart suggested that the Committee may wish to take more time to consider this. He noted that members may wish to avail of refresher training on Governance Committee matters but he conceded that COVID-19 may cause difficulties in this regard. He queries whether there would be any online materials available.
48/20.2	Ms Mann-Kler asked whether Mr Stewart had now taken on the role as being the Non-Executive Director with a finance background following the resignation of Mr Leslie Drew. Mr Stewart confirmed that he had.

48/20.3	<p>Mr Clayton said that the Committee is grappling with new challenges and he welcomed the opportunity to avail of refresher training as he had found this useful in the past, particularly the opportunity to talk to people on other Boards. Ms Mann-Kler wondered if there was an opportunity for members of other HSC Governance Committees to come together. Mr Stewart noted that there had previously been a forum for Chairs. Mr Cummings suggested that he could raise this with his professional body, the HFMA. Members were content with that suggestion.</p>	Mr Cummings
48/20.4	<p>Mr Stewart noted the question about the attendance of the Accounting Officer and he suggested that in future, once the agenda has been finalised the members can determine whether any other officers should be asked to attend. He looked forward to the attendance of the Accounting Officer at the next meeting.</p>	
48/20.5	<p>Members APPROVED the Audit Committee checklist.</p>	
49/20	<p>Item 13 – Any Other Business</p>	
	<p><i>Whistleblowing</i></p>	
49/20.1	<p>Ms Mann-Kler noted that at the last meeting there was reference made to revised guidance on whistleblowing issued by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. She said that following that meeting, she and Miss Taylor had taken the opportunity to review PHA’s Whistleblowing Policy. She said that an article about the updated Policy had been included in the staff e-zine, including a short paragraph reaffirming her commitment to whistleblowing as PHA’s Non-Executive Director with responsibility in this area. She noted that the terminology now being used is “raising concerns”, and this was now included in the Policy title.</p>	
49/20.2	<p>Mr Clayton welcomed the update and said that he was aware that among Trusts a working group has been established. He said that Trusts have a “Designated Support Person” and he agreed to get more information on this. Miss Taylor said that she was unaware of such a forum. Ms Mann-Kler said that she had had a useful meeting with Mr Kieran Donnelly and Ms Pamela McCready from the Northern Ireland Audit Office and also Ms Nicola Lappin, the Chair of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. She noted that the guidance refers to “Speaking Up Guardians” so that staff and the public feel more comfortable about coming forward.</p>	
	<p><i>Retirement</i></p>	

49/20.3 Mr Stewart thanked Mr Cummings for his attendance at the PHA Governance and Audit Committee and for his support and advice during his service with the PHA. On behalf of the Committee, he wished him a long and happy retirement and thanked him for his public service. Mr Cummings thanked Mr Stewart for his words and said that he had been involved with Audit Committees for 30 years and was pleased to see that there were no Priority 1 recommendations following the last audit.

50/20 Item 14 – Details of Next Meeting

Thursday 3 December 2020 at 10:00am

Fifth Floor Meeting Room, 12/22 Linenhall Street, Belfast.

Signed by Chair:

Joseph Stewart

Date: 3 December 2020