

## HTA Board meeting paper, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Agenda item	5.1
Purpose: for information or decision?	<p>Governance</p> <p>The paper provides an overview of the business of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>Professor Gary Crowe, Chair of ARAC, will also provide the Board with an oral update on 7<sup>th</sup> March.</p>
Decision making to date?	N/A
Recommendation	The Board is asked to note the content of the Report.
Which strategic risks are relevant?	N/A
Strategic objective	All
Core operations / Change activity	Core operations
Business Plan item	Private Office – facilitating Board, Committee, and Senior Management functions, providing good governance support and compliance with Government requirements
Committee oversight?	ARAC
Finance and resource implications	N/A
Timescales	For consideration by the Board on 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Communication(s) (internal/external stakeholders)	N/A
Identified legislative implications	N/A

HTA meeting papers are not policy documents.  
 Draft policies may be subject to revision following the HTA Board meeting

## Background

1. Three other Board Members (Mhairi Anderson, Tom Chakraborti, David Lock KC and Jessica Watts) attended as observers, to enable them to learn more about the work of the Committee. Dave Lewis gave his apologies.
2. The Committee discussed the following items as material elements of the meeting.

### *Internal Audit*

3. The Committee received a report from GIAA on the proposed HTA 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan.

The Committee noted the progress to date and requested and received assurances that the clearance of outstanding GIAA recommendations had the required attention. The Committee enquired of GIAA if the audits would be finished in time for the Annual Opinion (due at the end of March) that feeds into the Annual Reports and Accounts.

The Committee considered the previous focus of GIAA reports and the current strategic risks and then approved the proposed GIAA plan for 2024/54, as drafted.

### *Audit Tracker*

4. The Committee reviewed the Audit Tracker and was provided with an update. The Committee noted the reduction in outstanding audits (from 24 to 9) from when Dr Sullivan, CEO, took up post. The Committee considered how the risk of losing staff with specific skills and experience ('single point of failure') is managed.

### *External Audit*

5. KPMG and NAO presented their plan for audit of the HTA's Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24. The Committee noted the management risks highlighted and the proposed approach to the audit for this financial year.

*Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT)*

6. The Committee received an oral update from the Executive. The Committee noted that work continues on the interim submission (to be ready by end of February) which will be used as the HTA's baseline towards the final submission at the end of June. The GIAA's steer was that as an organisation it is important for the HTA to decide where it wishes to be in terms of levels of compliance and risk appetite. The Executive reported that this is in the forefront of the HTA's mind as to what is the most proportionate, but also realistic for the organisation to achieve. The Committee noted the report.

*Cyber Security*

7. The Committee reviewed the Cyber Security dashboard for Quarter 3, 2023/24. The Committee noted progress on the HTA's Microsoft secure score, the volume of Viruses intercepted, Device vulnerability, SPAM activity, staff mandatory training, RTANCA alerts received from NHS X, and the HTA's exposure score. The Committee noted that since the last ARAC meeting, a new Head of IT has been appointed, who joined the HTA in November 2023.

*Strategic Risk Register*

8. The revised Strategic Risk Register (SRR) was considered by the Committee, including a change of proposed format and register.
9. The Committee noted that the Executive review this register each month and amend the risk ratings, as required. The Committee noted the actions taken by the Executive to mitigate the potential risks.

*Sector Risk Assessment*

10. The Committee received an update on the HTA's assessment of sector-specific risks, which the Committee commended for its comprehensiveness and excellence. During the discussion, the Executive provided updates on: (a) progress on a two-way flow of data sharing – with NHS England, (b) liaison with NHSE on mortuary capacity, and (c) unannounced inspections. The Committee advised that bringing data together and trending it would be helpful, which the Executive will consider for a future meeting.

11. The Committee noted the report.

*Other items*

12. The Committee was content to note the Summary of Policies.

13. The Committee considered and approved the HTA's Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure. The Committee highlighted the need to: (a) reference the ARAC Chair as the Board Champion for Whistleblowing in the actual text of the policy, rather than in an annex, and (b) how disclosure could be made by staff. The Committee asked that a revised policy be recirculated for approval by 'written procedure' outside the meeting.

14. The Committee reviewed the ARAC handbook and ARAC Terms of Reference. The Committee noted a reference to the late Queen at paragraph 29 on page 151 of the pack, which should have read 'The King'. Moreover, the Committee asked that the seasons-themed order of business, e.g., 'winter' or 'autumn', be addressed and revised outside the meeting. Apart from the typographical oversight, which will be corrected, and the issue around the season-themed 'order of business', the Committee was content to note the ARAC Handbook and ARAC Terms of Reference.

15. The Committee noted the HTA's Gifts and Hospitality register for this year.

16. The Committee noted there were not any issues to report on grievances, disputes, fraud, and other information.

*Any Other Business*

17. Under Any Other Business, ARAC received updates on the following:

18. Committee Effectiveness Review - The Committee received an oral update on the planned Committee Effectiveness Review, which upon completion, will be analysed.

19. Government Functional Standards - The Committee heard the paper set out the level HTA's rationale around the level of compliance aimed for each Government

HTA meeting papers are not policy documents.

Draft policies may be subject to revision following the HTA Board meeting

Functional Standard ahead of the 2024/2025 internal audit. The Chair asked that any comments be shared with the Executive 'offline' after the ARAC meeting.

20. Accounting Policies and Judgements – The Committee noted that the accounting policies set out in the Annual Report and Accounts have not changed from 2022/23 to 2023/24. The Committee noted there are no critical accounting judgements, and if an important accounting policy change, the Committee would be notified prior to the next ARAC meeting.

### **Recommendation**

21. The Board is asked to note the content of this report.