



Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 11 March 2024 at 8.30am via Teams

- Present:** Sue Jarvis (*Co-opted Governor*)
Andrew Jones – Chair (*Co-opted Governor*)
Graeme Slater (*Foundation Governor*)
- In attendance:** Neil Clark (*WBG – Internal Auditor*)
Michelle Williams (*Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Systems*)
Lenore Burgess (*Finance Manager – job share*)
Jackie Hazelden (*Finance Manager – job share*)
Kevin Burke (*IT Manager*)
Ruth Potter (*Clerk*)

The Chair welcomed all attendees and the meeting was opened in prayer at 8.30am.

PART 1

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Declarations of interest

Members were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter that formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at this meeting. There were no declarations made.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Amelia Southward. The meeting was declared quorate.

1.3 Items to be included under any other business

There were no items submitted for inclusion under any other business.

1.4 Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 19 November 2024 (previously circulated)

The minutes were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair in accordance with Article 12 (3) of the Articles of Government. The publication of the minutes was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.5 Matters arising from the minutes (previously circulated)

Committee members considered the action log prepared by the Clerk. It was noted that all actions had been completed.

2. INTERNAL AUDIT

2.1 College management update report on previous recommendations and actions taken (previously circulated)

The Vice Principal presented this report which was designed to give governors oversight of management action taken in response to all previous internal audit recommendations. It was noted that one recommendation arising from the Student Recruitment review undertaken in May 2024 was outstanding. The Vice Principal referred governors to the action taken to address this recommendation and confirmed that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) now considered the action complete.

Resolved:

- **That the college management update report be received and noted.**

2.2 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Audit Report *(previously circulated)*

The Internal Auditor, Neil Clark of WBG, presented this report and outlined the purpose of the review which was to ensure that the College had appropriate policies and procedures in place that were compliant with legislative requirements. The scope of the review was highlighted alongside the audit methodology.

A total of two low grade recommendations had been raised. There were also a number of areas of good practice highlighted within the report. The Internal Audit opinion stated that the Governing Body could take strong assurance that appropriate processes were in place to comply with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) legislation. Benchmarking data from other similar audits was highlighted.

The Vice Principal confirmed that in response to the recommendations, an updated EDI strategy and action plan had been presented to the Quality & Standards Committee for scrutiny the previous week. This had been recommended for approval by the full Governing Body.

The College's EDI Link Governor confirmed that he had met with the Internal Auditor as part of the review process.

Resolved:

- **That the EDI internal audit report be received and noted.**

2.3 Budgetary and Financial Reporting Audit Report *(previously circulated)*

The Internal Auditor presented this report and outlined the purpose of the review which was to ensure that the College had appropriate budgetary and financial reporting arrangements in place that were embedded throughout the whole College. The scope of the review was highlighted alongside the audit methodology.

A total of one low grade recommendation had been raised as well as one observation. There were also a number of areas of good practice highlighted within the report. The Internal Audit opinion stated that the Governing Body could take strong assurance surrounding the budget setting, monitoring and reporting arrangements in place across College. Benchmarking data from other similar audits was highlighted with regard to the number and nature of recommendations raised.

Q – What was the plan for staff training to address the audit recommendation?

A – CPD slot for staff identified at the end of term. Specific training for budget holders would also be recorded so that newly appointed budget holders were able to access appropriate training as required.

Resolved:

- **That the Budgetary and Financial Reporting internal audit report be received and noted.**

2.4 Sector Update

The Internal Auditor provided a verbal update on pervading sector issues including:

- cyber security
- safeguarding.

He confirmed that the key sector risks remained as previously discussed.

The Chair thanked the Internal Auditor for his reports to the Committee.

Neil Clark left the meeting at this point.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT AND ASSURANCE

3.1 JISC Cyber Security Action Plan – update report *(previously circulated)*

The IT Manager presented this report and updated governors on progress made against the actions arising from the second JISC assurance review. It was noted that completion against plan stood at 63%.

Updates were provided on specific actions including patch management process, penetration testing and offsite backup, and the IT Manager referenced new software the College would be trialling which had the potential to support with a number of recommended actions. In addition, an update was provided on actions related to management of the Microsoft 365 estate for which completion against plan stood at over 85%.

The IT Manager confirmed that the College had secured Cyber Essentials accreditation which was now a requirement of the College's Accountability Agreement.

Q – Was the College required to attain ISO27001 accreditation?

A – No. Consideration had been given to this standard from an IT perspective, but there were wider implications for the whole college should full accreditation be pursued.

The Chair congratulated the IT Team on securing Cyber Essentials accreditation and thanked him for his report.

Resolved:

- **That the JISC Cyber Security Action Plan progress report be received and noted.**

3.2 **Risk Management Register and Action Plan** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal presented the College's risk register and action plan and highlighted the key risks.

There was one significant risk which related to the establishment of a permanent leadership structure within the College. It was noted that the recruitment process for a permanent Principal had commenced.

Seven contingent risks were highlighted within the register and, of these, the Vice Principal highlighted the risk related to the recruitment and retention of staff. An update was provided to governors on the recent outcome of the NASUWT ballot on strike action related to the NJC pay dispute. The potential impact for the College was highlighted. There would be an opportunity for the Finance and Resources Committee to consider this situation further in the wider context of the College's financial management. The Vice Principal confirmed that the College had not yet received confirmation of the additional funding it was due to receive in relation to the pay award and National Insurance increases. In addition, funding for in-year growth would be two-thirds of what was anticipated, however this was also pending confirmation.

Following discussion, the Chair requested that governors be kept updated on developments and the potential impact on the College.

Resolved:

- **That the Risk Management Action Plan be received and noted.**

ACTION – Update governors on potential action

4. **ANNUAL REPORTS**

4.1 **Business Continuity Annual Report** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal presented this annual report which highlighted the business continuity arrangements in place via the College's Business Continuity Plan and IT Disaster Recovery Plan. There were no new incidents to report impacting on the business continuity of the College for the academic year 2023-24. Incidents brought forward from the previous year impacting the continuing operation of the College were highlighted.

Resolved:

- **That the Business Continuity Annual Report be received and noted.**

ACTION – FGB item – Business Continuity Annual Report

4.2 **Safeguarding College Assets Annual Report** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal presented this annual report which highlighted the range of methods through which the College's assets were protected. Of particular note were the estate security measures which had been enhanced during the year through the installation of turnstiles at the student entrance.

Resolved:

- **That the Safeguarding College Assets Annual Report be received and noted.**

ACTION – FGB item – Safeguarding College Assets Annual Report

5. OTHER MATTERS

5.1 Governor Training

It was noted that the Internal Auditor had provided refresher training to members on funding and the individualised learner record (ILR) prior to the meeting. The governor training log would be updated accordingly. Members were invited to highlight any future training needs to the Clerk.

5.2 Urgent Business

None

5.3 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10 June 2024 at 9am in College.

The Chair thanked all members for their attendance and contribution.

The meeting was brought to a close at 9.10am.

Signed by the Chair: _____


On this day: _____ 10 June 2025 _____