

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 March 2024 at 4.00pm in the IT Suite

Present:	Lucille Knapp	Governor	Chair	
	Andy MacCaig	Governor		
	Craig Ablett	Governor		(Teams)
	Helen King	Co-opted Governor		
	Aaron Keers	Co-opted Governor		(Teams)
In attendance:	Corrie Harris	Principal/CEO		
	Alicia Bruce	COO		
	Faye Williams	Vice Principal		
	David Aldridge	Executive Director Human Resources		
	Susan Brook	Internal Auditor – Wylie & Bisset		(Teams)
	Graham Gillespie	Internal Auditor – Wylie & Bisset		(Teams)
	Jason Burgess	External Auditor - Beever & Struthers		(Teams)
	Catherine Duro	Head of Governance (Clerk)		

SECTION A – ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS:

24/22 Apologies for absence (Agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from David Aarons.

24/23 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

24/24 Minutes of the last meeting (Agenda item 3, Paper A)

The minutes of the meeting held on **Monday 22 January 2024** had been circulated previously and were **approved** as a true and accurate record.

24/25 Actions outstanding (Agenda item 4, Paper B)

The outstanding actions were **reviewed**.

The delays in the payroll audit actions were understood and would be reconsidered at the next meeting when the new payroll audit report was received.

24/26 Matters Arising

There were no further actions arising.

SECTION B – GOVERNANCE:

There were no governance updates.

SECTION C – CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER UPDATE:

24/27 Risk Register (Agenda item 5, Paper C)

The risk report was received with updates highlighted; the committee **understood** that the debt transfer had enabled the reduction of some risks.

The Committee were **assured** of the positive progress in reducing risks facing the college. The reliance on banks had reduced to within risk appetite, although the long-term financial future remained a red risk as debt not being repaid, and there was work to be done to retain the RI Financial Health score whilst managing staffing pressures. We have moved the debt from Santander, although our commercial bank account is still with them, online banking etc. there was no permission from DFE to use overdraft facilities. The Committee understood that the bank had been extremely supportive for many years, supporting the servicing of the debts.

IT Projects have gathered pace with responsibility moved to an assistant principal. The breadth and strength of the IT team was questioned. The Committee was **reassured** that there was an appropriate experienced manager and solid project manager overseeing the improvement and benefiting from expert external support.

A CFFR had been requested from ESFA as the college moved out of intervention to PIMS.

It was **recognised** that the risk register was due for a strategic review at the April Governor Development Day.

SECTION C – External Auditor Update

There was no update due from the External Auditors.

SECTION D –INTERNAL AUDITOR UPDATE:

24/28 Internal Audit Report (Agenda Item 6, Paper D)

The Internal Audit process that had been followed was **explained**.

The Student Experience Internal Audit report was received. The auditors were able to give a **strong level of assurance**, with just one recommendation. Good practice had been identified. Benchmarking completed against similar reviews with other organisations had confirmed this. Did identify one action regarding induction, managers agreed a survey would be used during enrolment process to identify lessons learnt. This was a recommendation rated as low, to build further on good practice in place.

Auditors were asked if they had been on campus. They explained it had been a remote desk top exercise to review process for assessing student satisfaction not actually testing student satisfaction.

Resolved: that the report be received.

24/29 Internal Audit Action Tracker (Agenda Item 7, Paper E)

The internal audit action tracker was **received** and the historic recommendations and remedial actions explained.

24/30 Internal Audit Plan Revisions (Agenda Item 8, Verbal)

The Payroll Audit report was due for this committee. The Committee were **informed** that the review went ahead, but the audit senior lead had requested additional checks so the report would come to the next meeting of the audit committee.

It was **asked** that SLT identify key areas for internal audit as a matter of urgency for the 4 days of audit still available, having had an EFSA Funding audit replace the need for internal audit of funding. **(Action)**

SECTION E – HEALTH AND SAFETY

24/31 Health and Safety Report (Agenda Item 9, Paper f)

Report taken as read and questions invited.

Assurance was given that swift action had been taken regarding a recent incident. One claim had been received but otherwise all matters had been resolved satisfactorily.

Health and Safety training not as well attended as the committee would like and the reasons for this **questioned**. It was explained that it was a limiting PDR grade if staff hadn't completed this mandatory annual training. The data was accurate but didn't allow for the varied timescales – it was an annual refresher and expected that the attendance would be much greater by the end of the year as everyone had different renewal dates depending on when they undertook their first training. IOSH Managing Safely and Director level - 1 day training was also being provided in response to driving improvement after the recent incident.

It was **asked** what policy covers bullying. It was **explained** that this is covered in more than one way through safeguarding and peer on peer abuse policies, it was covered in tutorials informing students how to recognise and report bullying. The Committee was **assured** it was dealt with through the disciplinary processes, in the current behaviour policy.

Congratulations were offered for the I feel safe numbers which a governor described as stunning across a large, open campus, well done. Investment in security teams and CCTV over the past three years, in addition to a new safezone app had enabled this.

The exclusion of knife crime from the report was **challenged**. It was confirmed that there had been no knife crime issues this year. There had been some issues last year. Students had since identified areas where they didn't feel safe, this knowledge had been used to circulate security in an informed and targeted way. Knife arches and drug dogs at the start of the year to reinforce priorities and safety, security being approachable and visible were all thought to have helped. Not heard of the county lines issues that we have previously had and reported on. Parental feedback was positive. **Very reassured** having tested that its exclusion from the report had been deliberate.

24/32 Health and Safety Link Governor update (Agenda Item 10, Verbal)

Update was provided, on recent meetings attended and legal updates which were being discussed. No concerns were raised.

Lambing weekend had been well received and without incident.

SECTION F - POLICY

24/33 Managing Allegations about Staff (Agenda Item 11, Paper G)

The revised Managing Allegations Policy was received and the small updates explained.

It was **summarised** that all staffing issues would be reported to the LADO directly by HR. The reporting of safeguarding issues to the LADO would remain with the safeguarding team.

Resolved: that the policy be **approved** by unanimous agreement.

SECTION G – Closing Items

24/34 Any other business (Agenda item 15)

It was **asked** where harassment is covered. It was **explained** that for students it is covered by the student behaviour policy, but that there were different policies for staff and students with appropriate repercussions.

The Committee **recognised** it was Corrie's last audit committee – thanks were given for a supportive transparent approach.

24/35 Impact of Governance (Agenda Item 16)

- Challenged an item not being included in a report to check it was deliberate and there were no gaps.
- Internal audit processes questioned.
- Health and Safety training challenged.

24/36 Date of next meeting (Agenda item 17)

24th June 2024 - 4pm

Meeting closed at 4.58pm