

Audit Committee

Tuesday 04 March 2025, 6:10-8:05pm
Block 1 Boardroom (1.204)



Meeting papers link: [2. 04 March 2025](#)

Committee members:

Ian Hughes (Committee Chair)
Kate Taylor

Officers in attendance:

Asam Hussain, RSM
Steph Morley, Director of Governance
Kylie Penn, Deputy Head - Safeguarding (1- 4.1)
Jon Priest, CIO (1-3.1)
Sean Rudolph, Director of Finance
Andrew Woodford, Vice Principal/CFO

APPROVED MINUTES

Item	Discussion	Action
1	Welcome and introductions The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance, in particular those attending their first meeting of the Committee. It was confirmed, due to only two governors being in attendance, the meeting was <u>not quorate</u> and therefore no formal decisions could be made.	
2	Procedural matters	
2.1	<u>Apologies</u> Apologies were received and accepted from T. Harvey-Pallent, N. Coughlin (BF) and L. Tweedie (RSM). The Committee requested Bishop Fleming be asked to send representation to all meetings of the Audit Committee, not only those where external audit matters were to be discussed.	AW & SM
2.2	<u>Declarations of interest</u> There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.	
2.3	<u>Minutes of last meeting and actions/matters arising</u> Those in attendance agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 04 December 2024 were a true record; however, formal approval would need to be sought outside the meeting for quoracy reasons.	SM
	The following updates were provided for previous meetings' actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Website review: to be addressed via RSM's follow-up audit (ONGOING)- IT disaster recovery: item on this meeting's agenda (COMPLETED)- Health and safety update: item on this meeting's agenda (COMPLETED)	

3 Requested items

3.1 IT systems protection

J. Priest presented his report, which was noted by the Committee.

The Committee thanked J. Priest for the report, noting how it helped to explain and provide assurance regarding the college's back-up arrangements in the event of a cyber incident.

3.2 Health and safety report

A. Woodford presented the report, which was noted by the Committee, and highlighted the following compared to previous years:

- The number of reported accidents remained stable
- The number of reported near misses had increased, which reflected the work undertaken to emphasise the importance of reporting
- First aid calls had increased, which highlighted the need to clarify thresholds/definitions
- The college was changing from an outsourced model for campus security to an internal campus community team to improve campus intelligence and responsiveness

The Committee thanked A. Woodford for the report, noting the improved format and trend analysis.

4 Risk management

4.1 Spotlight: Prevent risk assessment action plan

K. Penn presented the latest Prevent risk assessment, which had been updated to reflect learning from recent Prevent-related incidents indicating threats now being multi-faceted rather than single-issue threats. She advised the risk assessment was updated quarterly (or sooner if required) and shared with the local partners.

K. Penn referred to the risk assessment and informed the Committee, since the publication of the meeting papers, the college had begun to work with an external expert to develop the lockdown procedure, including the development of different responses depending on the risk being faced.

The Committee asked if PC Paul Denyer was engaged and involved in developing the college's response. K. Penn confirmed he was involved wherever possible and spoke about the benefits of onsite police presence as a deterrent itself.

The Committee acknowledged the amount of local intelligence sharing and joint planning that took place and asked if this happened at regional level. K. Penn advised this was a more developing picture but confirmed there had been a notable improvement since the Southport attacks.

The Committee spoke about the potential impact of recent policy changes in the USA and the normalisation of extremist views/behaviour. K. Penn advised this had already been observed in college - students displaying support for Nazism on two separate occasions. She confirmed the behaviour had been swiftly addressed and that plans/resources were being updated to reflect this increased risk.

The Committee asked how students were able to access mental health support (via CAMHS) given the pressures on these services nationally. K. Penn explained any student with a Channel referral/Child in Need Plan who had identified mental health needs should be prioritised by CAMHS; all other students would be referred to the CAMHS waiting list.

The Committee noted the amber-rated risk relating to external guest speakers and asked for more detail. K. Penn advised all presentation content was reviewed in advance by the department organising the speaker; however, there was currently no centralised recording of this, which had been identified as an area for improvement.

The Committee noted the updated risk assessment/plan and it was agreed a further update would be provided at the next meeting following the engagement with the external expert. It was agreed the reference to governor reporting would be amended to the Audit Committee.

**KP &
SM**

KP

4.2 Risk register and update

A. Woodford presented the risk register summary and latest risk action plan, and displayed the live risk dashboard via PowerBI. He highlighted the top risks to the college as Prevent, curriculum reform and cash/capital funding.

The Committee noted the improvements made to the risk register, how risk was reported to the Audit Committee and specifically the live overview provided by the dashboard; however, all agreed there was further work to be done to review and rationalise the risk register and ensure a more strategic focus.

The Committee noted how risks had been categorised into mitigated/unmitigated on the dashboard and asked if it was possible to show which of those risks were outside of the risk appetite, which would then help to focus on those risks most in need of attention. It was agreed A. Woodford would look at how this could be incorporated into the dashboard.

AW

The Committee noted the summary report and updated action plan.

4.3 Risk Management Policy

A. Woodford presented the updated policy and explained the proposed changes related to the involvement of committees in discussing risks coming under their remit (with the Audit Committee retaining overall strategic responsibility).

The Committee recommended the updated Risk Management Policy for approval by the Corporation and requested the production of a brief report summarising the top 10 mitigated/unmitigated risks for sharing with the Corporation at its upcoming meeting.

SM

AW

5 Audit plans and reports

5.1 Audit plan mid-year update

The Committee noted the mid-year update.

5.2 Audit action plan progress report

A. Woodford presented the report, which provided an update on progress made towards implementing audit actions since the previous meeting, and confirmed the actions from the most recent audits had been incorporated.

It was agreed the report format/presentation would be reviewed, along with the incorporation of reference numbers.

**AW &
SM**

The Committee noted the progress report and requested two updates be made to confirm completion status (Learner Number Systems and IT Disaster Recovery actions).

AW

5.3 Internal audit update

A. Hussain presented the following internal audit reports:

5.3(a) Internal audit progress report: the Committee noted the report.

5.3(b) HR framework audit report: the Committee noted the report and the audit outcome of 'Reasonable assurance'. A. Woodford informed the Committee about how the move away from paper-based to digital systems would remove the risk of required signatures not being obtained, which had been identified during this audit.

5.3(c) Risk management report: the Committee noted the report and the audit outcome of 'Reasonable assurance'. A. Hussain advised the outcome reflected the college's journey to review how risk was identified, managed and reported, and acknowledged the discussions during the previous item would help to further improve risk management at the college.

5.3(d) FE benchmarking: the Committee noted the report.

6 Annual policy reviews

A. Woodford presented the updated policies below, highlighting key changes, and the accompanying documents. For quoracy reasons, the policies were not presented for approval and it was agreed the next steps would be confirmed to ensure all policies were signed off appropriately.

SM

6.1 Anti-Bribery Policy

The Committee recommended approval by the Corporation.

6.2 Anti-Fraud self-assessment checklist

The Committee noted the checklist and asked for clarification regarding the purpose of the RAG rating. A. Woodford advised, within this report, the RAG rating related to likelihood.

It was agreed the requirement for completing the checklist would be checked and confirmed with the Committee, as well as a review of format/presentation if the checklist would continue to be presented to the Committee.

**AH
AW &
SM**

6.3 Anti-Fraud Policy

The Committee recommended approval by the Corporation.

6.4 Anti-Fraud Response Plan (Restricted)

A. Woodford informed the Committee the section relating to interviews under PACE had been updated to state no staff members should be asked to do this. The Committee noted an inconsistency between Section 1.4 and the relevant appendix, and it was agreed this would be made consistent following a check regarding the appropriateness of any staff undertaking an interview under PACE.

AW

6.5 Anti-Money Laundering & Proceeds of Crime Policy

The Committee recommended approval by the Corporation.

6.6 Freedom of Information Policy

The Committee recommended approval; however, due to quoracy reasons this would be obtained outside the meeting.

7 **By exception reports**

The following update reports were provided to the Committee:

7.1 Cyber security

Nothing to report further to Item 3.1.

7.2 Data protection and FOI

The Committee noted the report and asked how commercial FOI requests were responded to by the college. A. Woodford confirmed all FOI requests were responded to according to the legal requirements.

7.3 Fraud, bribery and money laundering

Nothing to report.

7.4 Governance

Nothing to report.

7.5 Health and safety

Nothing to report further to Item 3.2.

7.6 Regulatory compliance

Nothing to report.

7.7 Whistleblowing

Nothing to report.

8 Any other business

The Chair noted this had been K. Taylor's last meeting of the Audit Committee and expressed his gratitude for her valuable contributions during her time as a member of the Audit Committee and the Corporation.

There was no further business for discussion and the Chair closed the meeting at 8:05pm.

Next meeting

Thursday 22 May 2025, 6:00pm (Room 1.204)

Actions from this meeting

Audit Committee – 04 March 2025			
Ref	Action	Owner	Timescale
2.1	Communicate the Committee's request for external audit representative to attend all meetings	AW & SM	Mar 2025
2.3	Seek approval of minutes by email (as meeting not quorate)	SM	Mar 2025
4.1	Present a more detailed report re response planning	KP & SM	May 2025
4.1	Amend reference in the report re governor consideration (from F&R to Audit)	KP	Mar 2025
4.2	Refer IH risk dashboard access issue to IT	SM	07/03/25
4.2	Explore how 'out of threshold' risks can be captured on the risk dashboard	AW	May 2025
4.3	Include a report on the top 10 mitigated/mitigated risks in the Corporation meeting papers	SW & SM	20/03/25
4.3	Refer Risk Management Policy to the Corporation for approval	AW & SM	20/03/25
5.2	Allocate each action a reference number in the audit action tracking report	AW	May 2025
5.2	Review the format for reporting audit action progress	AW & SM	May 2025
5.2	Confirm completion status of the Learner Systems and IT Disaster Recovery actions	AW	20/03/25
6	Confirm the approval routes for the policies due to meeting not being quorate	SM	11/03/25
6.2	Review the reporting format of the fraud self-assessment checklist and confirm the reporting requirements	AW & AH	Jan 2026
6.4	Amend the Anti-Fraud Response Plan to provide consistency of reference to interviewing under PACE	AW	20/03/25