



Open Confirmed Minutes

Present: Mr A Nelson (Chair), Mr K Webb, Mr N Uppal, Mr K Fleming, Ms H Haigh and Mr G Wright

In attendance: Mr A Leach, Ms J Thomas, Mr A McCulloch (Tiaa)

Clerk: Mrs C Coupland

1. Apologies for Absence/ Declaration of Interest

No apologies were received and there were no conflicts of interest declared.

Mr Nelson welcomed Mr Leach to his first audit meeting. It was noted that Mr Leach was in attendance only for this meeting and was to official join the committee as of September 2020. Time was taken for introductions to be made.

Mr Nelson also thanked Ms Fleming for her valuable contributions over the years towards the impact of the work of the audit committee; for tonight was Ms Fleming's last committee meeting.

2. Minutes from Meeting held on 24.03.20

Resolved:

- That these be accepted as a correct record.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the last meeting.

4. Data Protection & Security Report 2019/20 (term 2)

Ms Thomas reminded the Committee that this report is produced termly, for presentation to the committee, to collate results of security testing, PEN testing, email testing, attempted attacks, security breaches and cyber security risk assessments.

Members were advised that the planned email phishing test (cyber –testing) did not take place as planned in term 2 and has been postponed to the early part of term 3 due to the move to remote working. Ms Thomas confirmed that the outcome of which will be provided to the committee at its next meeting.

Ms Thomas informed members that a range of guidance has been shared with all staff in the lead up to and during lock down; offering advice on safe homeworking practises, data protection and security. Ms Thomas also confirmed that the IT Acceptable and Safe Use has been reviewed to ensure that the College and its users were sufficiently protected given forced remote working. The committee was satisfied that the approach adopted by the college satisfactorily addresses and mitigates against the increased cyber risks and challenges to data security during these unprecedented times.

The committee acknowledged the risks associated with virtual meeting platforms. All noted that the risk was manageable given that safe practices and stringent protocols were adopted by staff and students.

The committee noted that there was an error within the report with a wrong date posted for a security breach (September 2020). Ms Thomas was to raise this with Ms Harris to amend. Ms Thomas also agreed to check as to whether PEN testing included mobile devices.

The Committee agreed that the report provides comprehensive assurance to senior leadership team and Governors that the college is doing as much as it can to mitigate against these risks. And in particular are continuing to follow all business processes and procedures designed to protect the college from fraud.

Resolved:

- **That the report be received**

5. Internal Audit Reports

Mr McCulloch presented Tiaa's reports to the committee:

Assurance Review of Staff Performance Management (Feb 2020)

Mr McCulloch passed on Tiaa's apologies to the committee for not having provided a report on the assurance review of staff performance management. Mr McCulloch confirmed that the site work had been completed and feedback meeting undertaken with Ms Thomas. Regrettably the auditor has since left the company and the draft report has been misplaced.

The committee accepted Tiaa's apologies and thanked Mr McCulloch for his honest account. Mr McCulloch will forward on the report as soon as possible to Ms Thomas and will present at the next audit committee. Governors were agreeable to this approach but asked for the minutes to record that should the audit report indicate anything less than reasonable assurance, Governors are to have sight of it immediately.

Assurance Review of the Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning Assessments (May 2020)

The review considered the implementation and monitoring of the TLA framework at the College. This followed on from the initial review that was undertaken when the current arrangements were introduced in 2016/17.

The overall assurance assessment assigned was substantial. One routine recommendations was made. No operational effectiveness matters were raised for consideration.

The committee noted that the audit findings report did not provide any relevant benchmarking data for comparative purposes. Mr McCulloch explained that this particular report was a niche audit; as it was very specific for this college

Assurance Review of Continuous Professional Development (May 2020)

The review considered the arrangements for identification, delivery and monitoring of Continuous Professional Development for staff at the College.

The overall assurance assessment assigned was reasonable. One important and one routine recommendations were made. No operational effectiveness matters were raised for consideration.

The audit confirmed that there is a clear and comprehensive Strategic Overview of CPD. In relation to 2019 – 2020 this contains the following areas related to Development and Training:

- To review subject specific support in the light of recent curriculum changes, such as the introduction of Linear A Levels;
- To continue to develop the pedagogy of teaching staff, to remain research-aware and to share good practice;
- To invest in the development of outstanding leadership and management;
- To continue to invest in the professional development, which supports and promotes and supports outstanding teaching and learning practice; and
- To harness the talent and creativity of all staff.

Ms Thomas clarified that the CPD budget recorded within the report excludes staff hours. All members present agreed that the healthy budget awarded to this area demonstrates the college's commitment to investing in staff professional development.

Members acknowledged that the two recommendations related to the college's CPD recording processes. Ms Thomas confirmed that all training is now logged within the web based performance and development management tool, College IP. This was previously a paper based exercise and since moving to electronic reporting there has been a significant increase in data available for auditing purposes which has naturally indicated an increase in tracking noncompliance. The college accepts that this impacts upon any reporting generated from College IP regarding the number of courses taken by staff. Action will now be taken in respect of the recommendations made and accepted.

Resolved:

- **That the reports be received**
- **For Mr McCullough to forward on the outstanding report to Ms Thomas as soon as possible.**

6. Recommendation tracking

The Committee accepted the Audit Recommendation Tracker.

It was noted that the external audit recommendations have not been cited within the tracker. It was agreed beneficial for them to be included to enable the committee to track progress and be assured that they have been addressed fully in the lead up to the next external audit for sign off.

Resolved:

- **To receive the report**
- **For external audit recommendations to be included within the tracker.**

7. Board Assurance Framework (BAF) : strategic risks 2020/21

Ms Thomas presented the draft key business risks (strategic, financial and operational) as identified by herself and the Clerk for 2020/21. Ms Thomas explained that given that SLT have been focused on reopening the college, time has not been afforded for the senior leadership team or the risk management group to consider and approve the risks submitted for consideration today. Ms Thomas therefore welcomed the committee's initial thoughts to inform and shape further discussions amongst the senior leaders. Members viewed the identified strategic risks as relevant and necessary going forward. Consideration was however given to the significant risks posed to student progression and quality of student experience as a consequence of COVID 19. Ms Thomas welcomed the committee's views and will represent the key business risks for approval at the next meeting.

Mr Nelson advised the committee that as a member of the sub-group, that had met with the senior leadership team to discuss reopening plans, he was able to confirm to members that there was a dedicated and comprehensive risk assessment to underpin and inform the college's ongoing response to COVID 19. It was agreed that it would be beneficial going forward for the committee to time to review the COVID 19 risk assessment at each meeting. Members agreed that should it become too burdensome for the committee to provide it with the focus it needs or distract from other responsibilities, it may be necessary to delegate the ongoing review to a dedicated subgroup of governors.

The Clerk confirmed that all current strategic risks identified throughout 2019/2020 will, by the end of the academic year, have all been subject to assurance reviews at committee or corporation level. The Committee remained satisfied that the Board Assurance Framework, in its entirety continues to provide an adequate and effective framework for risk management.

Resolved:

- **That the report be received.**
- **For the BAF overview for 2020/21 to be represented for approval at the next committee meeting**
- **For the colleges COVID 19 risk assessment to be presented as a standing item at committee meetings.**

8. Code of Practice and Procedure on Whistleblowing

The Clerk informed the committee that the existing policy reflects good practice initiatives and is currently procedurally compliant with relevant legislation for how the college is to manage and respond to any raised concerns.

The Clerk has proposed minor amendments this year to the existing policy by citing two further concerns within the scope of the policy in order to reflect government advice (as per the governments website).

The committee noted that it may be appropriate to cite additional staff members for students for them to be comfortable in raising their concerns rather than limiting it to their tutor or a member of the senior leadership team, as per the current policy. It was agreed beneficial for the clerk to explore sector practice in how other colleges encourage internal disclosure of concerns and for the committee to again revisit the policy at its next meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that the existing policy remains available to all via the website and via Moodle (the college's virtual learning environment).

Resolved:

- **For the Clerk to seek sector views via NORVIC**
- **For the Policy to be returned for consideration at the committees next meeting**

9. Post 16 Audit Code of practice 2019-2020

The clerk confirmed to the committee that to date the assurance and accountability requirements for all periods commencing on or after 1st August 2019 is yet to be published. Any revised assurance and accountability are therefore at this point not know.

Usually the Code is released during the spring term. This year there has been an understandable delay to its publication given COVID 19.

The clerk advised the committee that there is to be no pause to external audit testing for colleges and should restrictions continue all work will be completed by Wylie & Bissett remotely.

As usual to support corporations in drafting the statement of regularity, propriety and compliance, the ESFA will probably also publish a self-assessment questionnaire which is likely to again be a required element of the Regularity Audit. Once published, this shall be presented to the Committee for consideration at its next meeting in the autumn term.

Resolved:

- **That the update be received**

10. Self-Assessment of Committee Work/Business and Annual Review of Terms of Reference.

The Committee reflected upon its work throughout the academic year and agreed that it is fully covering its delegated responsibilities. No changes were proposed to the Committees terms of reference.

Members also considered how the Committee's work has impacted/ contributed to the overall work of Governing Body during this academic year. Members contributed their opinions for the Clerk to insert into the committee's self-assessment report which will be distributed to all Governors.

Resolved:

- **That the Committee has complied with its terms of reference**

11. Any other Business.

Letter received from ESFA on 5th June 2020 (confidential item).

12. Performance Indicators for Auditors (confidential item)

13. Learner Impact Reflection

The impact of discussions and scrutiny of the Committee work in improving the outcomes and experience for all learners was considered and the following agreed:

- **Ensuring safety of students, the quality of learning provided, the maintenance of IT and premises facilities, and funding of & Governor oversight of Strategic and Financial plans for students**
- **Audit opinions provides assurance that the college has an adequate and effective framework for governance, risk management and internal control.**
- **Ensuring that the College is maintaining the quality of learning to maximise the Student Learning, Experience and Outcome.**
- **Ensuring that the college provides a safe environment for students, staff and visitors.**
- **Assurance received that the college remains compliant with regularity and propriety requirements as per the terms and conditions of funding.**
- **Critical review of annual performance ensures that the committee continue to focus, scrutinise, challenge and support the college leadership team in sustaining and improving the outcomes and progress of all students and enable students and staff to learn and work in an outstanding institution.**
- **Ensuring that the college remains to be proactive and legally compliant in known and emerging external themes and challenges e.g. COVID 19**

14. Determination of confidentiality

That supporting papers for agenda item 7 and 11 are determined as confidential.

14. Date of next meeting: to be confirmed.