

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Audit Committee held on
Monday 1 February 2021, at 11.00am via Microsoft Team**

Present: Mark Bass - Chair
Balbinder Panesar

In attendance Maxine Deslandes – Director of Finance & Estates
Mike Cheetham - RSM
Emma Gipson - RSM
Victoria Eastwood – Chief Governance Officer

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Introductions were made by all present. Apologies for absence were received from Wijay Pitumpe, Chief Finance & Enterprise Officer, Nick Fanning, RSM and Sarkis Mazmanian.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare an interest in relation to specific items on the Agenda if appropriate. None were anticipated.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Monday 7 December 2020

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 7 December 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to an amendment to the first bullet point on page 13 where an ‘and’ was required.

Bal Panesar questioned whether it had been confirmed whether the two unsigned employment contracts had now been signed. The Chief Governance Officer (CGO) confirmed she would follow this up with the Chief Transformation Officer (CTO).

4. Matters Arising

An update on outstanding actions from the December 2020 Committee meeting was provided:

Ref.	Action	Responsibility	By (Deadline)	Update
12.	CTIO and Head of IT to be invited to attend the March meeting of the Audit Committee to discuss cyber-security.	CFEO/CGO	15/03/21	Arrangements in place for March Audit Meeting.
14.	Additional Meeting to be convened to discuss progress against internal audit recommendations.	CGO	January 2021	Complete
10.	Forecast reports to be uploaded to the Boardpacks portal.	CGO	ASAP	Complete
15.	Additional meeting of the Governors of the Committee to be convened to discuss re-appointment of Auditors.	CGO	ASAP	Discussion to take place at the January Meeting.

5. Internal Audit Process

The Chair reported that to take some of the workload off the team and emphasise the importance of the internal audit, going forward the internal audit progress update would be facilitated by the Internal Auditors. It was noted that this was not a criticism of the work undertaken by the Director of Finance & Estates (DOFE) but an intention to assist and ensure that staff who were being chased for actions were not being chased by someone internal but by someone external to the College.

The DOFE thanked the Chair for his support and advised that she needed to remain in the loop and discuss with the auditors how the process worked. The volume of the previous set of internal audit recommendations had been particularly high and there had been an issue trying to get one person to coordinate all the linked recommendations resulting in an impact on varying departments and teams. It had, however, been made clear to relevant staff that the lead for the audit was responsible for the recommendations to be completed.

The Chair stated that one or two recommendations had taken a long time due to staffing changes but no-one had taken responsibility.

Bal Panesar advised that there was a clear defined responsibility for each action and if there was also a clear dependency that must be defined. If progress was not being made then the recommendation must be escalated. The time to resolve some of these points was far too long for issues that should be straight forward to resolve.

Agreed: That the position be noted.

6. Internal Audit Recommendations – Progress Update

The DOFE provided an update on internal recommendations advising that some recommendations were dating back over a long period and were still waiting to be resolved. There had been restructures and realignments within the teams across College and new people in post. New staff had taken time to understand the business and often looked at different ways of addressing issues resulting in some recommendations still being work in progress.

The Chair referred to the apprenticeship strategy noting that the presentation of the strategy in March 2021 would be evidence that the recommendation had been completed as the vacant post had now been filled. The DOFE responded that four different members of staff had previously led on this but the Principal/CEO was now managing the team. Bal Panesar questioned why the recommendation stated that the COO was the person responsible. The DOFE replied that when the original recommendation was created this area sat under the COO but it has since changed to the Principal/CEO. The College currently had a Head of Business Development and a Head of Apprenticeships and it needed to be clarified who was responsible.

The DOFE reported that the exams recommendation was part completed but September 2021 had been identified as the date for when the system would be in place. The exams policy had been approved but the implementation of the system had been delayed due to exams being postponed because of the pandemic. The Chair questioned whether there was any evidence that the system worked on the assumption it had been tested. The DOFE replied that the system could not be demonstrated at present. It was agreed that the member of staff responsible for incomplete actions should attend the meeting to discuss progress and the Head of CIS would be asked to attend the March meeting of the Committee.

The Committee discussed the actions that had been completed. In response to a query from the Chair, the DOFE clarified that the Etracker system provided objectives set for the learners and tracked their progress against the set targets – evaluating distance travelled and progress. The DOFE clarified that the recommendation was a documentation issue and not an issue with the process or validity of the system.

The Chair stated that there seemed to be an underlying theme of waiting for a system to fix the problem, for example with regard to the eligibility for funding action, the skills scan document could have been completed manually. The DOFE responded that the form was in place but needed to be embedded into the system – the Head of Apprenticeships had confirmed that the form was part of the process. The Chair stated that for the action to be fully completed it would need to be reported back to the Committee

that the system was automated by July 2021. The DOFE confirmed that progress would be updated at each meeting.

Bal Panesar stated that the ILCT plan was attached as a link to the document and advised that this should be noted as best practice. It was acknowledged that more work was required to ensure the evidence provided was adequate.

Discussion took place on the management and monitoring of budgets recommendation. The DOFE reported that the meetings held in the previous year had been face to face and therefore a record of these meetings had not been kept. Meetings this year would take place via Teams and also be recorded ensuring evidence of attendance at training sessions.

In response to a query from Bal Panesar, the DOFE explained that the business planning process started with the Principal/CEO setting out the political landscape and the business planning sessions taking place this week specifically focussed on budgets, pay, non-pay and capital. The DOFE advised that capital requests far outweighed the budget. The detailed capital programme would be provided in the management accounts for these projects.

The Chair asked where copies of the Safeguarding Policy and also the Guest Speaker Policy were held for Governors to be able to access. The CGO confirmed that the policies were available on the BoardPacks portal and the Safeguarding Policy would need to be available on the College website. *Post meeting note: The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that the Safeguarding Policy was awaiting final formatting from Marketing and would be uploaded to the website.*

Bal Panesar stated that the action for Learner Assessment and Quality was incomplete and the sentence required finishing. The DOFE advised that this would be amended.

In response to a query from the Chair, the DOFE confirmed that Smart Assessor was definitely in place for apprenticeships but this was still being rolled out to other areas. The Chair commented that a paper trail may be in place but the system may not yet be automated in these areas.

Action:

**Head of CIS to attend March meeting of the Committee to discuss Exams booking system.
Learner Assessment and Quality action - sentence to be completed.**

7. Matters arising requiring College staff to withdraw

Discussion took place on the 2021 dates for the internal audit process as the dates for the Marketing, Health and Safety and HR audit required amendment. It was noted that there would not be any internal audit reports for presentation at the March meeting due to timings. The DOFE advised that the CFEO had a revised timetable which had been agreed with the Executive team and this would be forwarded.

8. Any Other Business

There were no items for discussion.

The Internal Auditors left the meeting.

9. Audit Services Tender

The Chair advised that it had been a long time since the College had retendered or formally re-approved the internal and external audit services. The External Auditors had also since merged and a plan needed to be in place to tender going forward. The DOFE stated that a tender process was in place prior to the proposed merger which was halted whilst merger discussions were underway.

The DOFE advised that the normal process for audit tendering was to use the AoC Framework which would result in a large amount of the work having already been undertaken. The College would invite the companies listed on the framework to apply and then undertake a shortlist and interview process. As the College was a member of the AoC there was no cost to access the framework. In addition, the College had a new Head of Procurement in place who would facilitate the tender process as part of her role.

Discussion took place on appropriate timings for the tender process for both sets of auditors. It was agreed that the Internal and External Auditors would be re-appointed for this academic year but the

DOFE would provide a proposed timetable for the Committee taking into consideration the current works/plan of the existing auditors.

The DOFE enquired whether the additional costs for the Internal Auditors to undertake the audit follow up work had been agreed. It was agreed that the CGO would follow this up.

Approved: The Internal and External Auditors were re-appointed for the 2020/21 academic year.

Action: DOFE to provide timetable for tender process for internal and external auditors.

Action: CGO to ascertain additional costs from RSM for internal audit follow up arrangements.

10. Date and time of next meeting – Monday 15 March 2021, 4pm

The meeting concluded at 12.10pm.



ACTIONS FROM MEETINGS OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Ref.	Action	Responsibility	By (Deadline)	Update
C/f	CTIO and Head of IT to be invited to attend the March meeting of the Audit Committee to discuss cyber-security.	CFEO/CGO	15/03/21	Arrangements in place for March Audit Meeting.
3.	Confirmation of signed employment contracts to be provided.	CGO/CTO	ASAP	Completed – CTO confirmed via email.
6.	Head of CIS to attend March meeting of the Committee to discuss Exams booking system.	DOFE/CGO	March 2021	
6.	Learner Assessment and Quality action sentence to be completed.	DOFE	ASAP	
9.	DOFE to provide timetable for tender process for internal and external auditors.	DOFE	ASAP	
9.	CGO to obtain additional cost for internal audit follow up arrangements from RSM	CGO	ASAP	

Signed.....
Mark Bass (Chairman)

Date.....