

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE
HELD ON Wednesday 22 June 2022 at 16.00

Present: Mrs Sarah Ediss (via Zoom), Mrs Susan Martineau, Mr Hugh Stafford-Smith, Mr Dom Valente

In attendance: Members of SMT - Mr Ian Dumbleton (FD), Mr Dan Lodge (Principal), Mr Steve Martell (DP)

Mrs Russha Sellings (Clerk)

External - Mr Chris Rising (MHA MacIntyre Hudson)

In the Chair: Mr Hugh Stafford-Smith

1. Chair Introductions & Apologies for Absence

The meeting opened slightly later than scheduled at 16.10. Mrs Ediss joined the meeting virtually. Mr Banister gave advance notice that he may not be able to attend and had submitted comments and questions in advance.

Mr Rising was welcomed to the meeting, although would withdraw as agreed during Item 7.

The Chair declared this would be his last meeting as his current term was due to come to an end. He expressed his thanks to Mr Valente for agreeing to be his successor, subject to agreement at the Governing Body meeting next month.

2. Declarations of Interest

None declared with respect of the agenda items.

3. Minutes of the meeting 16 March 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment.

4. Matters Arising

Item 6: Assurance good practice (IA) – noted that Mr Rising had shared examples with the Principal
Item 6: AoC Gov Code to Noms - Clerk confirmed the Nominations Committee concurred with the approach

Item 6: Strategic planning outcomes (GB/UMAD) – strategic planning outcomes discussed at UMAD, further update at Governing Body

Item 9: External Auditor app (See Item 5)

5. Financial Statement preparations:

Papers: Buzzacott Audit Strategy Plan, External Audit engagement letter (signed)

(a) Audit Plan for the year ended 31 July 2022

Members were content with the strategy plan which they commented was well laid out, especially the timetable on page 4 and the helpful sector developments within the appendices. Members noted the addition on page 9 regarding capital projects, although it was understood that proportionality was an important factor.

In reference to the changes to the Accounts Direction from the ESFA, a comment was raised by Mr Banister via email that it may be prudent to create a plan for each Governor and the Clerk. The Clerk commented that there was a targeted approach in place, however agreed to document this in readiness. **(Action: Clerk)**

It was discussed whether the ESFA needed to sign the agreement or be informed of the new Auditor appointment, whereby it was confirmed on page 16 that this was not a requirement for a routine change.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the Audit Plan.

(b) External Audit engagement letter (signed by the Audit Chair)
This was a consent item for information with no comments raised.

6. Internal Audit Reports

Papers: Student Applications Internal Audit Report, IT Health check Interim Update

a) Student Recruitment

Mr Rising spoke to the report. He was satisfied that there were effective arrangements for monitoring recruitment across the College. The recommendations made should be implemented by the start of the next financial year, these included enhancing the admissions report and considering utilising further social media platforms for extended reach. There were some good practice examples shared from other organisations.

Members commented on the report which was pleasing and noted as consistent with strategic planning. Following a question about student retention, it was clarified that this was covered under separate processes. Reference was made to Mr Banister's question about the recommendation on mapping competitors. The Principal responded that any in depth analysis was complex due to the challenge of comparatives with provision across different settings, however it was acknowledged competitor insight was important for SMT as highlighted by Stephen Carville in his recent Strategic Planning review.

b) IT Security (interim report)

Part IIa minute: Criterion h) Information considered commercially sensitive

c) Any updates on plans for 2022-23

Members heard from the FD on the potential plan for future reporting which included suggestions from the Internal Auditor. Budgetary Planning and Controls and ILR with some flexibility around the third.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the Internal Audit plan.

[4.50pm – Mr Rising withdrew from the meeting for the next item]

7. Review of performance of Internal Audit provider 2021-22

Part IIb minute: Criterion h) Information considered commercially sensitive

[4.58pm – Mr Rising returned to the meeting]

8. Risk Management Annual report 2021-22 update inc:

Papers: Top sheet, RGM Minutes 23-05-2022, Fraud annual Report

(i) RMG minutes 23 May 2022

The Principal explained for the benefit of those not at the meeting that the cycle had been postponed to align with Quality Assurance and Risk Registers would therefore be drawn up in the Autumn term. There were no comments raised on the minutes.

(ii) Fraud Report

Updates to the report were more significant, covering the introduction and review of indicators with new ones included to ensure they were more explicit. The Principal sought the views of members on whether there were any additional risks to consider. Members questioned the rationale for the indicators used and the Principal responded that they were aligned with the

central Government guidance specific to the sector. Members further asked why section 5.2 had been removed and the Principal advised it was important to refine the report as well as adding new indicators from the guidance.

Members discussed the FD's role which would involve some redistribution of work across the Finance team in moving to 4 days per week and it was agreed to consider adding the FD's workload to the Finance Risk Register. In reference to section 5.1, there was a wider discussion on approaches to workload from a staff wellbeing perspective and also in cases where an unusual working pattern of staff could indicate potentially fraudulent activity. Members suggested the wording be more specific to the departments that may have access to systems such as finance. Mr Banister had also commented on this section, wishing to ensure the response covered the risk. Wording to be revisited. **(Action: Principal)** It was recorded that Mr Banister's comment on section 6.6 was already covered by the Internal Audit process.

There was a further update requested to include reference to the fact that a wide range of other types of fraud could be possible in section 5. Members also asked about awareness of fraud risks for staff and the Principal confirmed this was in hand and would be reinforced via INSET. **(Action: Principal)**

10. Regularity Audit (self-assessment)

Paper: Self-assessment questionnaire

The questionnaire was circulated post-dispatch of the papers with a covering note from the Clerk to explain the new question on external reviews of governance. The FD advised that there would be an amendment on page 14 to the value of expenses paid currently showing the previous year's figure, which was low due to Covid and lack of travel. The figure would be corrected to £988.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the Regularity Audit.

11. AOB

The Chair took the opportunity to express his thanks to SMT for all their hard work and willingness to respond to challenge from the Audit Committee over the years of his chairmanship.

12. Annual Meeting Assessment including ToRs (see over)

Paper: Committee ToR

The Chair reiterated the importance of the action plan resulting from the IT health check as discussed in Item 6b.

The Chair also suggested other Governors, not currently serving on this Committee, be invited to observe an Audit meeting to increase understanding of the Committee's remit. **(Action: Clerk)**

In the Autumn term, the Committee would need to report on their effectiveness and skills via the Audit annual report and the Chair was confident in the strength of the Committee.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The meeting in the Autumn term would take place on 23 November 2022 with the External Auditors Buzzacott attending.

The meeting ended at 17.35

Chair.....

Date.....

RRS 29-06-22