

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 11 February 2025 on MS Teams

Members: Linda Batchelor, Ken Curtis, Lowenna Ovens (Committee Vice Chair, Chair for the meeting), Sarah Sanderson and Jane Warren

Also Present: Lisa Briscoe (Director of Student Experience), Adele Bull (Director of Curriculum Development), Lucy Langdon (Chief Finance Officer, CFO), Vicky Pearson (Director of Teaching and Learning), Wendy Randle (Head of Governance), Robert Townsend (Chair of the Corporation) and a Validera representative.

Item	Discussion/Decision	Action
1	<p>Apologies and Declaration of Interests</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Daphne Skinnard. Martin Tucker (Principal), Jane Cashmore (Director of Operations), Hayley McKinstry (Director of Business Partnerships and Apprenticeships) and Lucy Maggs (Director of Quality and Penwith Campus) from the SMT sent their apologies.</p> <p>Lowenna Ovens has been appointed as the Vice Chair of the Committee and Ken Curtis has been appointed as Chair of the Committee. LO chaired the meeting.</p> <p>There were no further declarations of interest to those previously disclosed.</p> <p>Following a Governor suggestion, all Governors had been invited to attend a session on GDPR delivered prior to the meeting, by the internal auditors - Valdera. In response to Governor questions, it was noted that College policies are in place, annual reporting is reviewed by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and Cyber Security was an agenda item for this meeting. Governors not in attendance had provided evidence of completing GDPR training elsewhere.</p> <p>The agenda items would be taken in a slightly different order to support Validera's attendance.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
3	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the report and noted that, where items had not been updated, these would be completed under agenda items.</p>	

9	Internal Audit Plan 2024/25	
9.1	Progress against the plan It was confirmed that Validera have completed two internal audits with four more planned. Validera and the College were confident in the delivery of the plan.	
9.2	Internal Audits	
9.2i	Counter Fraud The Committee received the report. A Governor sought clarity on the scope of the audit and the fraud focusses. It was reported that the internal audit considered a broad scope which included prevention, policy and procedure and had focussed on frauds such phishing via email and financial fraud. Validera reported that adequate assurance was provided, with three recommendations accepted by management. The College noted the need to review counter fraud policy and procedure and the recommendation to ensure active promotion of fraud awareness to include staff training, a College fraud response plan and the incorporation of fraud into risk management processes. Following a discussion on the good practice in place and areas for development, it was agreed there would be an agenda item at the next meeting to provide the Committee with greater assurance that robust policy and procedure for counter fraud was in place.	LL/WR
9.2ii	Health and Safety (H&S) The Committee received the report. Validera reported that adequate assurance was provided with five recommendations accepted by management. In response to a Committee member question, Validera were satisfied with the management responses to these actions. In response to a Committee member question, the internal audit report is shared with the College H&S Committee. The Committee agreed to request that Search and Governance identify a H&S Lead Governor to attend the College H&S Committee to improve governance oversight within this area. In response to a Governor question, SMT will liaise with the Principal to explore how best to ensure progress against the recommendations and subsequent reporting to Committee.	WR SMT
9.2iii	Follow up The Committee were keen to understand the reasons for the slow progress made against policy management recommendations. It was reported that the Head of Governance and CFO have identified the need for an effective policy management process across the whole College and plan to commence this work at the start of April; an update will be provided at the June meeting. The Committee encouraged prioritisation of policies linked to key risks, to include counter fraud.	WR/LL

9.3	<p>Recommendations tracker</p> <p>The Committee received the paper noting the inclusion of rag ratings and timelines which provide a clearer view of timely progress against recommendations. It was noted that this report is reviewed by Validera and linked to their follow up report.</p>	
4	<p>Progress against Strategic Objectives</p> <p>Objective 8 - Establish a clear sustainability strategy to achieve a target of net zero by 2050.</p> <p>The Environmental Sustainability Lead Governor reported that the Governors' Environmental Sustainability task and finish group have reviewed the Sustainability Policy and are overseeing the development of milestones and targets for the three strands of the plan; Leadership, Governance and Stakeholder Engagement, Teaching, Learning and Research and Estates and Operations. These areas align with the Association of Colleges (AoC) Climate Action road map.</p> <p>The Lead Governor updated that the group's preference was to retain a wider scope and ensure links with the strategic plan. In response to a Committee member question, there are no mandatory targets at present and the College is following sector practice using the AoC road map, though future mandatory reporting in the annual accounts is anticipated.</p> <p>A Committee member reflected on the low take up of the carbon literacy training by staff. The College recognised the need to promote this training alongside balancing staff time needed to undertake the many mandatory training requirements. In response to a Committee member suggestion, the College will consider how tutorials can be used to disseminate the key messages from the carbon literacy training.</p> <p>The Committee discussed an ambitious College net zero target of 2030, it was agreed the SMT will further explore the target and present a proposal at the June meeting; alongside this, the Committee will consider the Environmental Sustainability task and finish group outcomes.</p>	<p>VP</p> <p>LL LO</p>
5	<p>Risk Register review</p> <p>The CFO reported on the changes made to the Risk Register following Governor and Internal Auditor recommendations. It was noted that risks have been updated and reviewed by the SMT, with newer risks highlighted. The following risks were considered:</p> <p>Bus provision risk – the Committee were informed of a newer risk linked to transport, specifically the bus network used by students to attend college. At present students purchase a pass which enables access to the whole network providing increased flexibility and use of buses during the evenings and holidays. Prior to this arrangement, the College paid for the entirety of the bus network. First Buses have decided that an initial pass increase initially offered in</p>	

	<p>November was no longer financially viable and therefore plan to withdraw all routes from September 2025. Due to the College not expecting this timetable, the risk rating has been elevated. The College are exploring solutions with Callywith College and in response to a Governor question, Cornwall College holds a closed contract.</p> <p>Risk of staffing – significant work is being undertaken by the Operational Leadership Team (OMT) on proposed curriculum trends, staffing needs, group sizes for upcoming years and the efficient use of staffing; a report is planned for the Special Corporation meeting on 13/02. It was noted that the College have requested external support from the Further Education Commissioner's (FEC) Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability (CEFFS) offer. This will provide assurance to board that College proposals are realistic and deliverable.</p> <p>A Governor reflected on the need for a balance of risks and to ensure discussion turns into actual results; this will be explored further with the new Committee Chair.</p> <p>Staff risk – the Committee reflected on the mitigating actions and noted the upcoming challenges to be discussed further at the planned Special Corporation meeting. The College are developing the necessary communications and support packages for staff.</p> <p>MIS reporting – the Committee discussed the broader risk around information management and performance management reporting, including the risk linked to loss of income. Whilst the Committee were assured of compliance, they recommended the College consider reviewing/ splitting the risk to ensure greater scrutiny and assurance in this area.</p> <p>Estates and facilities – a discussion took place on the scoring of risks linked to food allergies and the mitigating actions planned, such as the recent SMT decision that no more home baked goods would be allowed for events and the unintended consequences for students of such actions, for example fundraising and student experience. The Committee recommended the College review the DfE's allergy code released in January 25 for caterers, to support proportionality of response.</p>	<p>KC/LL</p> <p>LL</p> <p>JC</p>
6	<p>Cyber security presentation and cyber essentials update</p> <p>The Head of IT was invited to join the meeting to deliver a presentation on cyber security. A copy of the slides is available on Convene in the meeting folder.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the Head of IT for a very informative presentation.</p>	
7	<p>Cyber Essentials update</p> <p>The Committee understood the investment required in the College IT infrastructure to ensure Cyber Essential compliance in line with ESFA requirements. The Committee reflected on the related risks and in response to</p>	

Chair Approval 18 March 2025