Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee

Minutes of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee meeting held on
Tuesday 3 June 2025 at Truro College and on MS Teams

Members: Linda Batchelor, Ken Curtis, 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). Nathan Coughlin (Bishop Fleming) and a Validera representative were also present.

Item	Discussion/Decision	Action
1	**Apologies and Declaration of Interests** Apologies were received and accepted from Daphne Skinnard. The Committee received an update on Lowenna Ovens. Apologies were received from the following SMT members; Martin Tucker (Principal) and Lucy Maggs (Director of Quality). There were no further declarations of interest to those previously disclosed.	
2	**Minutes** The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.	
3	**Matters Arising** The Committee reviewed the report, agreeing the closure of actions linked to carbon literacy training, balance of risk, DfE's allergy code, private meeting with the auditors, OfS risk register, and self assessment of environmental sustainability against the AoC's FE Climate Road map. Action 8 – Governor challenged whether the College were comfortable with the impact of the slippage in the testing of the IT business continuity plan, noting the risks linked to cyber security within the risk register and other actions within the report. It was noted that a discussion had taken place with the Head of IT and that the College will request a sooner date for when the disaster recovery test will be undertaken. 9.2ii - H&S Lead Governor role – it was noted that external recruitment will be undertaken to fill this role. 9 – Critical Incident and Emergency Recovery Plan test – following a request from Committee, this will be undertaken prior to the next ARA Committee meeting.	LL LB/VP

	Going forward the matters arising report will include 'propose closed' against actions, where applicable.	WR
4	**Progress against Strategic Objectives** **Objective 8 - Establish a clear sustainability strategy to achieve a target of net zero by 2050.** The Committee received the report and noted progress against the objective. It was reported that the Sustainability task and finish group will meet in September and feedback to the subsequent ARA Committee meeting.	
5	**Risk Register review** The Committee thanked the CFO for the useful report and invited Committee comments. Transport risks - a Governor questioned the rag rating of transport – specifically buses, noting the change in contracts. The risk register will be updated to reflect the current position. IT and cyber security – a discussion took place on the relevant risks. The Committee were keen to ensure the College are delivering on the mitigating factors and testing around cyber security. The Committee were provided with reassurance that the College and Callywith will meet their respective cyber essential requirements within the timeframes, as Truro & Penwith College's IT department are responsible for this action. Further detail to be included in the risk register around timescales. Financial risks – the budget for 2025/26 is being prepared and indicating an improved position due to efficiency measures implemented, and changes in funding. A Governor noted they are used to seeing a risk register detailing impact and financial risk, with reputational risk as a risk, and asked Committee members to reflect on the structure of the risk register. Another Governor noted an expectation to see less risks and/or a reduction in impact and therefore rag rating of risks, due to the mitigating controls being implemented. The Committee reflected on whether there was a need to test the controls on the risk register to triangulate the information received. This will be explored by the Committee Chair, CFO and Head of Governance in agenda planning. In response to a Committee member question, it was understood that the Internal Auditors review risk controls as part of the audit process and then include a statement on this within the final reports. In summary, the Committee were really pleased with the changes made to the report and encouraged movement from risk review as an administrative exercise	 LL LL ALL KC/LL/ WR

	to part of the everyday business, for example considering risks when making investment decisions. Future developments for the risk register include: ▪ The College to work with staff to ensure consistency for example within rag rating of risks. ▪ Consider a strategic and operational risk register ▪ Include target dates where there are plans to reduce risks so that the College and Committee can track progress made and risk level rating.	 LL LL LL
5.2	**OfS Risk Register review** The Director of Curriculum reported that the risks have been reviewed with the Associate Director – University Centre who is now well established in role and has a good level of understanding of the risks within the provision. It was noted the paper had been reviewed by the Quality of Education and Skills Committee.	
6 **6.1**	**Internal Audit Plan 2024 – 25** **Progress against the plan** The Committee had not received this paper. Validera provided a verbal update on progress against the plan.	
6.2	**Internal Audit reports** The Committee had not received the papers for this agenda item. Validera provided a verbal update on progress. ▪ Core Financial Controls – the College has received the draft report. ▪ Information Governance - the report is nearing completion. ▪ Bursary & Learner Support – this internal audit has started. The Committee expressed dissatisfaction with the delay in receiving the reports from Validera and noted the implications this has had on providing assurance to Board on College controls in these areas.	
6.3	**Recommendations tracker** The Committee received the paper and noted progress made against the actions. The ongoing work being undertaken in policy management and changes to policy management collegewide were noted.	
6.4	**Internal Audit 2025/26 plan** The Committee received the report. It was noted that the College and Validera had discussed the proposals alongside the risk register and other sector wide areas of interest. It was noted that Validera can provide a degree of flexibility should areas of focus change during the next academic year. Following discussion, the below actions were agreed: ▪ Share a copy of the draft plan with Committee Chairs for comment ▪ Integrate internal audit planning into spring term Committee meetings to support the generation of future internal audit plans.	 WR WR

	▪ Include Curriculum Planning on the Internal Audit Plan, not necessarily for 2025/26, following the CEFFS support. The Committee agreed to recommend to Board the Internal Audit Strategy for 2025/26, subject to any further feedback from Committee Chairs.	LL KC
7	**External Interim Audit Plan for year ending 31 July 2025** The Committee received the report and invited the representative from Bishop Fleming (BF) to provide an update. Initial assessment of audit risks – the risks were shared and understood to be broadly similar to previous years due to minimal change in the scope and requirements for the sector. Going concern - BF has assessed a higher risk than the College due to deficit concerns. Whilst the balance sheet remains strong, its deterioration is noted. The College's work and estimates will be reviewed. In response to a Governor question, a going concern paper is shared with the Finance, Infrastructure and People (FIP) Committee and will be included in the ARA Committee's annual report to Corporation. Pension assumptions – to be benchmarked with other colleges. It was noted that there is minimal guidance in the College Financial Handbook. Regulatory updates Post 16 ACOP and College Financial Handbook – the Post 16 ACOP guidance has been removed and replaced with guidance included under agenda item 13 and anticipated updates in the revised College Financial Handbook. It was noted that the College are reflecting any changes in policy and procedure. College Accounts Direction – additional information on Free School Meals (FSM) has been included and the College will need to be clear on the protection of underspend. The SORP is under review with work planned to ensure this is more specific to FE. A discussion took place on the narrative on the 16-18 bursaries and FSM and how this data is fed into the Quality of Education and Skills (QES) Committee. A Governor queried the availability of data to highlight gaps in attainment between students accessing FSM support and those eligible yet not accessing the support. The complexities of this data analysis were noted and will be considered with the Director of Quality. In response to a Governor question, there has never been any clawback of FSM funds, yet funds from 2024/25 remain available and the College have planned	 LM/LB

	communications prepared to support bursary access over the coming weeks. It was noted that funds can be used for the benefit of all students. The Committee reflected on the discussion regarding going concern and the variance between the College's and BF's risk assessment, challenging the Committee's view on this variance. It was noted that the College have risk rag rated on a longer term, whereas BF have risk rag rated on a twelve month basis. BF confirmed they remain satisfied with the position at present and that when sign off of the accounts is required, there will be additional evidence to support the risk gradings such as more current financial forecasting.	
8	**Update on plans for a full IT disaster recovery test and coms** As per the matters arising update.	
9	**Annual Health and Safety report** The Committee received the report. The Director of Operations highlighted that the College had introduced My Compliance this year which has supported digitising of many processes. This could impact on report outcomes going forward whilst the system embeds. A discussion took place on the impact of the restructure within the SMT on health and safety responsibilities. Following discussion the following actions were agreed: ▪ Future reporting to include a breakdown on curriculum areas where data trends have changed. ▪ Further investigation of areas where trends have changed. ▪ Assurance that SMT are reviewing health and safety reporting at their weekly meetings and unpicking trends.	SMT SMT SMT
10	**Annual Report on Data breaches, GDPR non compliance and FOI requests** The Committee received the report. The Director of Operations reported that the College await the internal audit report on information governance and that the Director of Student Experience will take on the DPO role. Following discussion the following actions were agreed: ▪ *See confidential Minutes*. ▪ Include more detail on the type of breach. ▪ Confirm the data breaches in 2025/26 were via email.	LB LB LB

11	**Policy management** An update on the actions planned had been provided earlier in the meeting. The cover sheet would be in place on governance policies by the end of September.	WR
12	**Counter Fraud – policy and procedure** The Committee debated the policy, noting the risks included in the risk register linked to counter fraud. Following discussion, it was agreed that the College revisit the policy to include reference to procedures and outcomes from benchmarking with other colleges. The policy will be re-presented to Committee in the Autumn term for review and recommendation to Corporation. In response to Governor questions on whistleblowing it was reported that the whistleblowing policy is available on the intranet and covered during induction.	LL
13	**Framework and guide for external auditors and reporting accountants of colleges** The Committee received the guidance.	
	Non Committee members to leave the meeting	
14	**Private meeting with the Auditors** The Internal Auditors and External Auditors reported there were no issues.	WR
	The auditors were thanked for their time and they left the meeting. The SMT returned to the meeting.	
	SMT left the meeting	
15 15.1 15.2	**Appointment of Internal and External auditors for a further 2 years** See confidential Minutes. **External auditors** See confidential Minutes. **Internal Auditors** See confidential Minutes.	
AOB	**Meeting of Committee members** Detail contained in the confidential minutes.	
16	**Dates of next meeting** Tues 25 November 2025 Tues 24 February 2026 Tues 16 June 2026 All meetings start at 4pm in the Valency Building, Truro campus. Sometimes there will be a training session at 3:30pm.	