



HOPWOOD HALL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15TH MARCH 2023

Meeting Commenced: 8.00am

Meeting Ended: 9.00am

Attendance: 75%

Quorum 3

Governors Present:

Clive Reid (Chair), Greg Walsh, Chris Ogbekhiulu

In Attendance:

Jo Bentley Executive Director Finance & Estates

Matthew Taylor Executive Director Performance & Planning

Patrick Clark ICCA

Fatema Hussein Clerk to the Corporation

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cathy Berry.

The Committee was informed that the Co-opted member Lee Sugden had resigned and some additional members would need to be recruited.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare any direct, indirect, personal, pecuniary or prejudicial interest on any item on the agenda.

There were no declarations.

3. Approval of the Minutes – 17th November 2022

Agreed that: the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2022 are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Action Progress log was reviewed, and it was noted that:

- 3 actions had been completed
- The financial regulations would be reviewed by the Employment & Finance Committee
- The updated Counter Fraud strategy would be brought back to the June 2023 Committee meeting

5. ESFA Funding Audit Outcome and Report

Discussed under Reserved Business.

6. Internal Audit Reports - ICCA

The following update was provided by ICCA:

- A review of the College's Business Continuity and Emergency Planning procedures had been undertaken
- This was against the backdrop of the 'Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings guidance' issued by the DfE in April 2022
- A Substantial Assurance opinion had been issued
- 1 Medium and 1 Low priority recommendation had been made and this was:
 - The College should ensure that it follows the approach set out within the BCP in carrying out an annual test of the lockdown simulation
 - The College should ensure that it includes details of "How you ensure that every student receives the quality and quantity of education and care to which they are normally entitled, including remote education" when the BCP plan was next updated

The Executive Director of Finance & Estates stated that:

- Whilst a full lock down drill evacuation had not been undertaken, students were made aware of the run hide tell procedure at tutorial sessions
- As there were 3000 students on site at Middleton, the College did not want to create a mass panic situation
- Management would however agree a date to carry out a lockdown drill, whether staggered on a building-by-building basis, or as a full site, to ensure the procedure was working and effective

Governor Questions

Q. Had online / remote learning systems been tested as part of the audit as they were critical to business continuity?

A. College had a well-established learning platform that had been effectively utilised during the Covid lock downs. Devices had also been provided to learners to enable them to continue with their learning. There had been a College closure on Friday due to the weather and a switch had been made to online learning

7. Whistleblowing (Speaking Out) Policy

The Clerk advised that the policy had been reviewed as requested by the Committee and would be made available on the College website once it had been approved.

The Committee requested that any changes that were proposed to the policy were highlighted to members before it was submitted to the Board.

Post Meeting Note:

It had been confirmed that no changes had been made to the policy when it had been reviewed.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed that the policy was recommended to the Board for approval.

8. Audit & Risk Management Update

The following update was provided to the Committee:

Internal Audit Plan

- The Student journey and retention audit would not be going ahead as this had been undertaken last year
- Discussions were ongoing with the Internal Auditors regarding the Apprenticeship processes and controls audit and which areas to include in this
- The audit may be deferred to June in order to allow time for the new processes to be embedded
- The review of the Kit shop had been brought forward

Audit Recommendations Monitoring Report

There were 21 recommendations on the action tracker, of which 13 had been implemented and 5 were not yet due. The implementation date for 3 of the recommendations had been revised.

Internal & External Audit Contracts

It was noted that Patrick Clark had an interest in this item.

Due to the uncertainties surrounding the ONS re-classification of Colleges and the implications of this, it was proposed that the contracts for internal and external audit were extended for 12 months by which time more information would be available.

RESOLVED:

The Committee confirmed that they were satisfied with the quality of the service provided by the Auditors and agreed that the proposal was recommended to the Board

Financial Performance

Financial performance continued to be strong and the full year forecast was for financial health to remain Outstanding.

Risk Management

- No new risks had been added or deleted since the November 2022 Committee meeting
- There were currently 22 risks on the corporate register
- Some of the financial risks had not materialised due to a growth in learner numbers and increases to income

Governor Questions

Q. Was there a risk of claw back of Apprenticeship income as a result of the PWC audit?

A. There was a risk and £100,000 had been set aside in contingencies for this

The Chair stated that the funding rate for the AEB Budget had not increased in the last 10 years and this was becoming an issue in many Colleges.

9. Meeting between the Auditors and the Audit Committee

An opportunity for the Auditors to discuss any matters with the Audit Committee to the exclusion of College management.

ICCA confirmed that there were no matters that they wished to discuss with the Audit Committee to the exclusion of College management.

The Committee agreed that a meeting between Audit Committee members and the Auditors was held before the June Committee meeting to review progress, and for the Auditors to raise any matters directly with members.

ACTION:

Clerk / Agenda

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 22nd June 2023 at 8.00am

*Standing Item

Chair's Signature:



Date: 22. 6. 23