Waltham Forest College

THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 MARCH 2024

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Michael Eichhorn (Chair)	present	Member
Renatta Nzomono (Vice Chair)	present	Member
Gbeminiyi Soyinka	present	Member
Simon Deschenes	present	Co-opted (independent) Member.
Graham Woolnough	present	Co-opted Member

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Naomi Shoffman	present	Director of Governance (DoG)

IN ATTENDANCE

Janet Gardner	present	Principal
Abena Rodman-Tay	present	Deputy Principal Finance & Resources (DPFR)
Sophie Wilkins	present	jisc (item 1618 - 1623 only)
Paul Knee	present	jisc (item 1618 - 1623 only)
Mark Tysom	present	jisc (item 1618 - 1623 only)
Stephen Pringle	present	Wylie Bisset IAS (IA) (item 1618 - 1628 only)
Stuart McKay	present	MHA FSA (FS) (item 1618 - 1628 only)

1618 ATTENDANCE OF THE PRINCIPAL AND OTHER COLLEGE MANAGERS AT THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

The Committee agreed that the Principal and Deputy Principal Finance and Resources (DPFR), be invited to attend the meeting.

1619 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1620 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no issues included on the agenda for the meeting in which they had a personal interest relative to the College.

1621 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2023

The Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 30 November 2023 were approved by the Audit and Risk Committee as a correct record.

1622 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2023

None

Minute 1623 recorded under Part 2

1624   INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS 2022/23

    i.   **Internal Audit REPORTS 2023-24**

The Internal Auditor (IA) took the Committee through the following four internal audit reports.

- **GDPR**

The purpose of this review was to ensure that the College is complying with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which came into force from May 2018. The IA completed a review of the processes in place to ensure compliance.

The overall conclusion from this audit was 'strong' assurance.

There was three low grade recommendation made around the College needing to review the FOI and Information security policies annually and producing a GDPR action plan; 1 observation for consideration was raised.

Twenty six areas of good practice were highlighted.

In terms of benchmarking, it was noted that the College has a similar number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against, but they are all low grade.

A member asked about the period chosen for testing. The IA explained this was driven by the timing of the audit work and the available relevant and timely information and data.

The Committee also discussed the following:

- The report re GDPR training and clarification re Governors undertaking this training was sought.
- The data sharing agreement.
- The rationale for low grade given re the GDPR action plan recommendation.

The Committee commended the good report.

- **Safeguarding**

The purpose of the review was to assess whether the College's systems and procedures for safeguarding are fully compliant with legislation and the College have taken all necessary steps to protect its students. This review sought to provide assurance to the Board, via the Audit Committee, that the safeguarding arrangements are adequate.

The overall conclusion from this audit was 'strong' assurance.

33 areas of good practice were raised and no recommendations for improvement were made.

In terms of benchmarking, it was noted that the College has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against.

The Committee commended the good report.

- **Budget and Monitoring**

This review considered the budget setting process to ensure that this is robust with input from all areas of the College.

The IA considered whether the arrangements for budget monitoring are fit for purpose and being adhered to by staff. The IA also reviewed the approval process of the budget and the in-year monitoring arrangements to ensure that any variations are considered and approved.

The overall conclusion from this audit was 'strong' assurance.

21 areas of good practice were raised, and 2 low graded recommendations made to improve controls further.

In terms of benchmarking, the College has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against.

The Chair asked whether the 2 findings were isolated cases or examples of something more systemic. The IA confirmed that these were isolated cases.

A member asked about the delay in notifying budget holders of their approved capital bids. The DPFR explained the process and the reasons for the delay. The process has been rectified to ensure this does not happen in future.

The Committee commended the good report.

- **Curriculum Planning**

The IA undertook a review of the suitability of the curriculum planning arrangements in place within the College.

The IA reviewed the process from determining which courses to be run, the delivery methods, through to the approval of the plan. The IA also reviewed the processes surrounding timetabling and the methods adopted to assess the quality of the curriculum offered.

The overall conclusion from this audit was 'strong' assurance.

26 areas of good practice were raised and no recommendations for improvement were made.

When benchmarking against other FE Colleges, the processes in place at Waltham Forest College are of a very high standard.

Outlook

The IA concluded by saying that the College needs to continue doing what it's doing and to build on this. The reports would be as close to perfect as they can be at that point in time.

A discussion ensued around how the review outcomes feed into and enhance the IA's audit pack.

A member asked re safeguarding – is there was anything the College should look at to ensure it has covered everything. The IA explained this area was reviewed 3 years ago. So he was expecting to have a near perfect review this time and the outcome provides assurance that all recommendations have been implemented and built on.

The Principal added that the reports demonstrate, we are taking all the actions we can reasonably be expected to take and show we are doing everything to mitigate the risks in these areas. The College is keeping up with new resources and expectations. However, she cautioned that we can never say there will not be an incident.

The Committee commended the good reports.

ii. Update on Internal Audit Recommendations

The DPFR talked through the report which tracks progress on the Follow-up recommendations from previous audits and highlighted the following:
- All audit recommendations from the College's internal and external auditors (including specialist organisations) are followed-up by SLT monthly to ensure that they are implemented in a timely manner.
- All previous year's internal audit recommendations have been implemented.
- The College held a simulation exercise with JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee), and the recommendations are being implemented.
- There have been four internal audits this year (2023/24) as per the reports from WB with recommendations being implemented.

The Chair asked about observations raised in reports and how they are taken forward. It was agreed to add observations raised by the IA to the tracker.

The Committee noted the positive Audit reports and progress made on the Internal Audit recommendations.

1625   POLICIES

i.   Freedom of Information Policy

The Committee received the revised Freedom of Information Policy.

The DPFR advised that the policy has been reviewed and updated in light of recommendations made during the GDPR Audit. The DPFR then highlighted the key changes.

The Committee noted a couple of typos and suggested amending the Heading date of review to date of <u>next</u> review.

Subject to those changes the Committee supported the changes.

ii.   Data Protection Policy

The DPFR advised that the policy has been reviewed and updated in light of recommendations made during the GDPR Audit.

She advised that there has been no changes made to the Data Protection Policy other than the date on the policy front page has been amended to February 2024 to note that it has been reviewed and is current.

The Committee noted a couple of typos and suggested amending the heading "date of review" to "date of <u>next</u> review".

Subject to those changes the Committee was supported the changes.

The Committee Agreed to Recommend to the Corporation approval of the Freedom of Information Policy and the Data Protection Policy.

1626   FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received The Freedom of Information Annual Report and Log.

The Committee noted the Freedom of Information Annual Report and Log.

1627   PIDA/WHISTLEBLOWING

The Committee noted that there have not been any reported incidents since the last report.

The Committee noted the verbal report.

1628   COLLEGE RISK REGISTER

The DPFR presented the Risk Register showing pre and post mitigation scorings, and controls in place to mitigate risks.

The DPFR advised the Committee of the Top 5 risks on the register, key risk movements and updated activities and emerging risks.

The DPFR reported that as requested by the Committee a footnote has been added to the risk register explaining the different risk matrices each set of auditors use to classify risks and how they contribute to the College's own assessment.

A member noted that the College won't achieve carbon net zero 2030 and asked if there would be any financial or legal implications if we don't achieve this. The Principal advised that the onus is on central government to support the College with this. As a College we have reduced our carbon footprint substantially and have recently put in a bid to the GLA for a loan for sustainability.

The Chair said that he likes the evolving risk register which is being used as a live document and suggested that it could be improved further by:

- Ranking the Top risks by residual risk,
- Colour coding risks by theme and

- Considering which combinations of these risks could reduce our financial health grading below good.

The DPFR gave an example on the last point and advised that this has been looked at.

The Committee further agreed that this is something to consider for the next academic year and that the Risk Register is at a good stage as is.

. **The Committee received and noted the updated College Risk Register.**

1629 EVALUATION OF AUDITORS' PERFORMANCE

The Committee discussed the report. The DoGov highlighted the following points:

- Overall, the IAS performance has met expectations with all Committee members agreeing that the incumbent audit provider be reappointed for the forthcoming year.

- In order to enhance the efficiency of the evaluation process staff members will be asked to complete the evaluation questionnaire post-review rather than in some cases nearly a year later. This timely feedback will capture fresh insights and facilitate more accurate assessment of performance and areas for improvement.

- Overall, the FSA performance has met expectations with all Committee members agreeing that the incumbent audit provider be reappointed for the forthcoming year.

The Committee discussed the timing of the annual private discussion with auditors and agreed to move this from the winter to the summer term meeting.

The Committee agreed to Note the report.

1630 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 11 June 2024

1631 ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

The Committee is asked to note that the agendas for future meetings will include the following items:
- Monitoring Statement on issues previously identified in reports presented to the Committee.
- Internal Audits
- Review of Audit Reports and outstanding recommendations
- Risk Register

1632 ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

GDPR training and clarification re Governors undertaking this training was sought.

Move auditors private discussion to June meeting.

19. 49 Finish

These minutes have been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

………………M Eichhorn ……………………………………………………. 11 June 2024………………………………..

           Signed   **Date**