



Mission Statement: *Inspiring learning, developing character, building futures*

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday 23rd February 2021
Time: Virtual meeting
4.00-5.00pm

Present: Ms C Coyne (Chair)
Ms J Gray (Principal)
Cllr D Clapham
Mr C Simkins OBE
Ms W Middlemas

Together with: Mr J Marchant (Audit Partner-Mazars)
Mr L Hopwood (Head of Computer and Network Services)
Ms A Crumblehulme (Observer)
Mrs S Hawitt (Governance Administrator-FCAT) Minute Taker

Apologies: Ms L Gates (Head of Finance)

		Action
01.2021	Preliminaries The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
02.2021	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.	
03.2021	Consideration of any items of urgent business There were no items of urgent business to discuss.	
04.2021	Confirmation of Quoracy It was noted the meeting was quorate.	
05.2021	Minutes of the joint meeting between (Audit and A&F) held on 24th November 2020 The minutes of the virtual meeting held on 24 th November were approved.	
06.2021	Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda a) Staff Costs -(item 28.2020 from the previous minutes) confirmation directors were provided with an update in regards to the percentage of staff costs compared to other colleges. It was noted that the current 70% benchmark is a challenging target to meet, but allows for discussion, challenge and assessment. Directors will receive further written information from Mazars.	

07.2021

Directors CPD- Cyber security

Lee Hopwood, Head of Computer and Network Services (CNS) gave a presentation on cyber security. He gave directors a brief overview of the following;

- structure of the CNS department and their responsibilities.
- cyber security and its core functions which include three main sections, users, networks and devices for staff, students and directors.
- a description of the 10 steps that contribute to effective cyber security.
- next steps - directors were assured that the CNS team regularly review the college threat landscape and adapt policies and procedures as required. External penetration testing will be carried out bi-annually to test for vulnerabilities within the college system. The college are working towards Cyber Essentials Certification which is a government backed scheme which will help protect the college against a range of the most common cyber-attacks.
- future reporting- in order to provide directors with the assurance that the college systems provide adequate protection in terms of cyber security, a report will be presented regularly to this committee.

Questions from directors

Asked about the biggest threat to the college it was noted that data remains a threat to college particularly during lockdown and home working, internet systems, access, permissions and weak passwords can contribute to the threat.

In response to a question about any likely gains in theft of data it was noted that personal data is worth millions, most common attacks encrypt files then charge a lot of money to retrieve them. It was noted that the college has excellent back-up systems in place to retrieve data with an additional layer of protection in place during lockdown.

Asked if the external penetration testing could be used as part of the internal audit programme, it was noted that reporting back to the Audit Committee would be good practice and allow them to take ownership.

The Principal recognised the well managed systems in place and thanked LH and his team for their hard work. LH agreed to deliver more training on potential threats should it be required.

Lee Hopwood and Amanda Crumblehulme left the meeting

08.2021

Risk Management

Cyber Security Report-Directors received and noted the first Cyber Security Report (paper 8.1) The report set out in detail the information presented to directors by Lee Hopwood.

Risk Management Report and Risk Register-Directors received the Risk Management Report and Risk Registers (papers 8.2 8.2a and 8.2b) presented by the Principal and were invited to ask questions.

Questions from Directors

Directors noted that it was pleasing to see a reduction in the risk from a score of 12 to 8 for financial health dropping to satisfactory or below 4.05 on the register. The Principal informed directors that funding for the college for the next academic year remained the same, the government had agreed to pay staff pension costs and more students had applied to the college with better retention figures, all these factors helped to improve the financial health of the college.

Directors also noted 4.07 on the register risk of low staff morale in times of austerity and increased workload. Directors were informed that there had been some very positive feedback from staff and overall morale remained good. It was noted that a lot of work with staff had been carried out including;

- Thrive at B6
- podcasts
- resources
- weekly briefings from the Principal
- staff check-ins

It was also noted that the student council are doing a great job of supporting students including a live broadcast during health & wellbeing week.

In response to the success of online learning directors asked if this is something that could continue in the future. it was noted that despite students adapting well to online learning it could not replace face-face lessons especially in the context of the wider social skills for students, however if students are absent for any reason there would be an opportunity for them to access home learning.

It was also noted that online lessons do provide students with more independence and may provide a bit more flexibility for teachers, however not much opportunity for saving from the day to day business. That said, if online conferences continued this may be an opportunity to save funds in the future.

08.2021 D1 Resolved: recommend the Risk Management Report and the Risk Registers to the Corporation for approval

09.2021 Internal Audit Reports

There were no Internal Audit reports to discuss

10.2021 Internal Audit Tracking Report

Directors considered the Internal Audit Tracking Report (Paper 10.1) presented by the Principal who gave directors an update on the progress made and highlighted the following;

- safeguarding champions had been postponed due to college closure and covid-19, this will be implemented as soon as is practical to do so.
- Single Central Record (SCR) discussions are currently taking place with the CNS team.
- DBS compliant review, directors were informed that all actions had been carried out by the college but contact details from the DBS service are to be received before this can be signed off.

Questions from Directors

In response to a question about the Update Service it was noted that college staff are only encouraged to join it is not mandatory. The college carry out checks every 3 years as suggested is good practice, however staff sign a disclaimer annually to confirm there have been no changes.

11.2021 Private meeting of the committee with Auditors without staff

No meeting was required

12.2021 Private meeting of the committee without Auditors and staff

No meeting was required

13.2021 AOB

The directors agreed to remain with Mazars for a further year with a possibility to then go out to tender.

14.2021 Identification of any new or amended risks

No new risks were identified

Date and Time of next meeting
Monday 14th June 2021 at 4pm

Signed _____

Date _____