

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting

**Held on Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 5.30pm
The Source, All Saints Building, Worcester**

	Present: Chris Hallam (Chair) Phil Colledge (Governor) Vicki Davies (Governor) Adam Hall (Governor) Donna Gibson (Clerk)	In Attendance: Michelle Dowse (Principal) Cherie Clements (Vice Principal Finance & Corporate Operations) Louise Tweedie (RSM) Asam Hussain (RSM)
Item:		Action For:
34.1	Welcome and Apologies Apologies were received from the External Auditors, Bishop Fleming and Neil Herman. The Clerk advised that the meeting was quorate.	
34.2	Declarations of Interest There was no interest to be declared.	
	<i>Members of the College Executive & Auditors left the meeting at this point</i>	
34.3	Audit Committee Concerns In the absence of College Management and Auditors members were able to inform the Committee of any matters they wished to raise.	
	<i>Auditors joined the meeting at this point</i>	
34.4	Auditor Concerns In the absence of College Management, the Auditors were able to inform the Committee of any matters they wished to raise.	
	<i>Members of the College Executive joined the meeting at this point</i>	
34.5	Minutes of the Previous Meeting The minutes were agreed subject to the Clerk making the suggested redactions before they are published.	Clerk
34.6	Matters Arising The actions were either complete or on the agenda. The Lead Governor or IT & Digital confirmed they had now been provided with documents they had requested (Ite 33.11C) is marked as complete.	
34.7	Determination of any other Urgent Business There was no urgent business to be considered,	

34.8a	<p>Internal Audit Progress Report</p> <p>The Committee noted that the report covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Radar Briefing • Highlighted the top 3 themes – Government Priorities, Geopolitical Instability, Cyber Attacks – noting that the latter two feed into each other and show the need for effective risk management to be in place. • A new risk has been identified – Resilience & Investment in Technology • Limited available funding <p><i>The Principal acknowledged the impact of limited or reduced funding, noting that the ESFA budget remains unknown and a reduction in some funding streams is anticipated.</i></p> <p>FE Benchmarking of Internal Audit Findings 2023/24</p> <p>The Committee noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document shows the yearly comparison across the client base. • Provides a summary of high priority issues. • Evidences a good use of audit resource. • Overall, the audit opinion has remained constant for the last three years. <p><i>A Governor asked about to slide 5. They were advised that RSM tend to focus more on FE, Sixth Form Colleges tend to be on a single site and their issues and complexities are not the same.</i></p>	
34.8b	<p>Update on GDPR Audit</p> <p>The Committee and members of the Management engaged in a robust discussion about the potential outsourcing of the Data Protection Officer (DPO) role.</p> <p>Management asked the Internal Auditors what do they see in place with their clients? They were advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role is often positioned with a staff member in a higher position than the role that has been explained. • Some colleges completely outsource the role. • Clerks / Governance Professionals undertake the role as an additional function. • There is a shortage of staff with the relevant experience of legislation/guidance. <p>Management advised that they would take the item to ELT for further discussion and bring an update to the June meeting.</p>	
34.8c	<p>Management Actions From Internal Updates</p> <p>The Committee noted that there are 11 actions and 8 of those have been completed and three that remain in progress on the 2024/25 action plan – Information Asset Register, Third Party Central Log and Acceptable Use Policy.</p> <p>The 2023/24 plan has 26 actions of which 23 are complete, with 3 in progress – Apprenticeship Development Plan, Skills Scan and Off The Job Calculator.</p> <p><i>With regards to the Apprenticeship Development Plan, a Governor observed that it is difficult when things are done retrospectively and suggested it could be tidied up?</i></p>	

	<i>The Governor asked the Auditors if they see a lot of colleges where outstanding actions are typical and were advised that it is quite common.</i>	
34.9	<p>A) Risk Management Plan The Corporation had a risk appetite session at the strategic planning day. The outcome was an agreement to use a risk appetite framework as per the Government Finance Function “Risk Appetite Guidance Note”. Risk levels would be identified by colour.</p> <p>Governors agreed the themes against risk appetite, which are already stated in the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum • Quality • Finance • Systems & IT • Estates • Governance and Corporate • Student Support <p>Risk appetite will be reviewed by Governors on annual basis and the plan has been updated to reflect that.</p> <p><i>A Governor stated that risk appetite needs to say where it stops and starts for each risk within an agreed boundary.</i></p> <p><i>Governors on the Committee agreed that the session at the planning day had provided good results.</i></p> <p>The Committee agreed to recommend the revised Risk Management Plan to Corporation for approval.</p>	Clerk
	<p>B) Strategic Risk Register The Committee reviewed the Spring Term Register and noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in 25/26 have been taken into account. • There are 6 risks rated as high. • ELT review the risks on a regular basis. • There were no new risks added to the register. • No risks were removed. • 2 actions are low for progress, this is due to the target date not yet being reached. • HE numbers continue to decline. <p>The Principal reported that moving to a new format was a good idea and the register has become a useful tool.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to recommend the Risk Register to Corporation for approval.</p>	Clerk
34.10	<p>FE Commissioner Annual Report 2023 – 2024 The report was noted for information.</p>	
34.11	<p>Review of Committee Performance against Terms of Reference 2023-2024 The Clerk had retrospectively mapped the Terms of Reference against the business and activity of the Committee during 2023 / 2024.</p>	

	<p>The Clerk asked the Internal Auditors if the document was similar to what they see in other colleges? In response they were advised that this is typically what is seen.</p> <p>The Committee was reassured that it consistently complied with the Terms of Reference, which had ensured that there are no areas where compliance has not been met.</p>	
34.12	<p>Committee Effectiveness & Meeting Reflections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The meeting was shorter than normal, as is usually the case for the time of year. • Challenge had been good. • The GDPR discussion had been robust. • Papers are improved and to the point. • Packs and the reading room are easier to navigate. 	
34.13	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There were no items of business to be discussed.</p>	Chair
	<i>Auditors will leave the meeting at this point</i>	
	<i>Confidential Agenda – Committee Members and College Management will remain in the meeting at this point.</i>	
	Date and Time of Next Meeting: 26 June 2025, 5.30pm All Saints Building, Worcester (note change of day to Thursday)	