

West Lothian College

9 June 2016

Audit Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Audit Committee held on **1 March 2016** at 2pm in the Barbour Suite.

Present: Graham Hope (Chair)
 Frank McGraw
 Norman Ross

In attendance: Jennifer McLaren (Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support & Finance)
 Mhairi Harrington (Principal & Chief Executive)
 George Hotchkiss (Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Innovation)
 Michael Smith (Scott-Moncrieff, Internal Auditors)
 Graham Anderson (Health & Safety Officer – item 16.08)
 Joanna Paterson (Board Secretary)

16.01 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular Norman Ross, newly appointed Board member, who had joined the Committee.

Apologies were received from Cynthia Guthrie, who was attending a Board member training event.

The Chair apologised for the inconvenience that had been caused by having to rearrange the date of the meeting.

16.02 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16.03 Minute of Meeting of 3 December 2015

The Minute of the meeting of the Audit Committee of 3 December 2015 was approved as a correct record.

16.04 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 3 December 2015

Members noted paper 2 detailing actions duly completed following the meeting of 3 December.

In relation to Action 1, inviting members to a presentation by the new HR specialist to the Finance and General Committee, it was noted that this would probably now be included in the June cycle of meetings.

There were no other matters arising.

16.05 Internal Audit Plan 2015-16

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support and Finance, introduced paper 3 on adjustments to the 2015-16 Internal Audit Plan.

The review of payroll and expenses would be postponed to 2016-17, allowing time for any changes flowing from the current review of HR structure and processes to bed in. The review of strategic and operation planning would be brought forward in its place.

The Committee noted that there were no significant risks in delaying the review, and that a system of internal control was already in place.

The proposed review of the student experience would have duplicated areas covered by the recent Education Scotland review, and would not have been a good use of resources.

It was noted that instead the Internal Auditors will review the College's Financial Regulations to ensure they are compliant with the Financial Reporting Manual and Financial Memorandum. The proposed Regulations would be brought for approval to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Audit Committee, and full Board.

The Committee noted the changes to the Internal Audit Plan.

16.06 College Audit Rolling Action Plan

Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support and Finance, introduced paper 4, showing progress in implementing recommendations previously agreed.

It was noted that this currently related to two main areas where work was being taken forward, workforce management, and business continuity planning. There would be more to report at the next meeting of the Committee. The deadlines were thought to be realistic, although it was recognised that the work on business continuity in particular was a major project, requiring engagement across the College.

The Committee noted the report.

16.07 Risk Management Report

The Principal presented paper 5 which provided an update on the 2015-2016 Risk Register.

In relation to educational attainment, it was noted that the College had been found to be 'effective' in its recent review by Education Scotland (the highest possible outcome). Areas for improvement that had been identified would be taken forward as a matter of priority, and through engagement with staff across the College.

It was noted that some areas of attainment such as challenges with maths and the gap between male and female attainment reflected wider, systemic issues. It was agreed that it was important to take these forward in conjunction with other community planning partners, including schools.

It was noted that the risk to organisational well-being had been escalated to very high. This was a result of the possibility of national strike action, and the potential for disruption and a demotivating effect locally. Every effort would be made to minimise the impact on learning during this time.

The Committee noted the report and agreed that the current mitigating actions being taken were appropriate in relation to the risks identified.

16.08 Health & Safety Quarterly Report

The Health and Safety Officer introduced the quarterly report to end December 2015. It was noted that although there was a slight increase in reporting, the numbers were very small and would be subject to fluctuations.

It was noted that the police had recently offered advice to Facilities Management staff on both bomb hoax arrangements, and the handling of suspicious mail.

In relation to the update on compliance with training on Display Screen Equipment, it was agreed that it would be useful to take a fresh look at the system and the arrangements that were in place to ensure both compliance and effective reporting to both managers and this Committee. This would be taken forward through the Health & Safety & Environment Committee.

Action 1: Assistant Principal, Curriculum Support and Finance

The Committee noted the report.

16.09 Committee Self-Evaluation

The Board Secretary introduced a paper that summarised comments that had been gathered from Committee members by email, as part of the annual committee self-evaluation exercise. General issues and recommendations were noted in discussion to be fed back to the Board at its March meeting.

In relation to the information received by the Committee, it was agreed that it would be useful to keep the objective of moving to a ‘dashboard’ system for health and safety reporting, and to ask for an update on progress with this.

Action 2: Health and Safety Officer

In relation to fulfilling the remit of the Committee, it was agreed that it would be helpful to be aware of best practice elsewhere in the sector, and that the Internal Auditors should be asked for any examples that could be shared.

Action 3: Board Secretary

16.10 Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

16.11 Review of Meeting, Supporting Papers and Training Needs

The Audit Committee was content with the meeting and supporting papers presented.

16.12 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Thursday 9 June at 9.30am.

Note: There were no matters discussed during the meeting, during which Members declared any conflict of interest, or the Secretary to the Board was aware from the Register of Interests that discussion could give rise to such a conflict.

Signed
Chair, Audit Committee

Date