

West Lothian College

24 June 2021

Audit Committee

Minute of Meeting of the Audit Committee held on **Thursday 4 March 2021** at 10am via Zoom.

Present: Sue Cook (Chair)
Seonaid Crosby
Lynne Hollis
Colin Miller

In attendance: Alex Linkston (Chair, Board of Governors)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal and Chief Executive)
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services)
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement)
Bill Dunsmuir (Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure)
David Eardley (Azets, Internal Auditors)
Mitchell Collins (Azets, Internal Auditors)
Ruth Holland (Mazars, External Auditors)
Emily Purdie (Health and Safety Officer)
Sandra Callan (Executive Secretary)

Virtual Visit to the Endurance Fitness Suite

Claire Glen, Director of the Faculty of Care, Health and Sport conducted a virtual visit to the health and sport area and in particular to the endurance fitness suite.

The tour concluded with a question and answer session with the staff from this area who had joined this part of the meeting.

The staff from the sport/fitness/exercise courses were invited to speak about the challenges they and their students had faced during the lockdown. The feedback was very positive and it was noted that links with other colleges had strengthened throughout the lockdown and there was a lot of sharing good practice. Students had been very good at engaging with tutors and some of the courses ran drop in sessions for students to chat.

Risk Assessments were in place for students returning to college.

The Chair thanked the sport/fitness/exercise staff for participating in this session.

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1 Welcome/Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to Bill Dunsmuir.

Apologies received from Simon Ashpool and Richard Lockhart.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minute of Meeting of 26 November 2020

The Minute of the meeting of the Audit Committee of 26 November 2020 was approved as a correct record.

4 Matters Arising from Minute of Meeting of 26 November 2020

All actions noted as being completed.

Regarding Action 1, the 22nd March (1pm-4pm) best suited the Board to hold the risk workshop. Invites would follow.

Regarding Action 7, the Principal advised that she would be doing a presentation next week at the board meeting and found that the set of questions helped to gather some useful information.

Regarding Action 9, the chair requested that her thanks be passed onto the sport/fitness/exercise staff and how impressed the committee had been with their participation and enthusiasm.

5 Health and Safety

(i) Quarterly Health and Safety Report

The Health and Safety Officer presented the report which provided an overview of the health and safety standards at West Lothian College from October 2020 to December 2020.

The Health and Safety Officer provided main highlights from the report and also updated the committee with the most up to date figures

regarding staff undertaking the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment. A total of 240 staff had now completed.

COVID-19 risk assessments were continually being kept up to date with government guidance.

The Health and Safety Officer confirmed that fire alarm testing takes place every week and normally twice a year for full evacuation.

The college had also been re-awarded the silver Healthy Working Lives award and was working towards the gold award.

(ii) Annual Health and Safety Report

The Health and Safety Officer presented the annual report and it was noted that a lot of regular activities did not take place due to not being on campus and priorities had been changed due to COVID-19. The main priority was ensuring that risk assessments were kept up to date with government guidance.

The annual data collection contained in the annual report went back seven years and the committee felt that they only required to see 5-years data for trend purposes.

The Health and Safety Officer agreed to amend future reports to show the last five years annual data.

Action 1: Health and Safety Officer

The mental health and wellbeing of the students was discussed. The Principal informed the committee that the college carries out surveys with the students and assesses the feedback received on an ongoing basis.

A lot of activity and additional support had been put in place. The most recent survey undertaken by the student association showed that there was an increase in the number of students taking part in the survey and about one quarter of the students were reporting challenges with their mental health.

The college was doing a lot of work through the student support team, lecturers and other support staff. An example being, a 'Man Cave' had been set up by an engineering lecturer for males to talk about their mental health.

The last staff survey in November demonstrated that the mood amongst college staff was good but acknowledged that there were challenges.

The committee thanked the Health and Safety Officer for the informative reports and also noted the good work being undertaken by the college to address mental health challenges among staff and students.

6 Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure Update Presentation

The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure delivered a presentation which focussed on a reflection of last year and information on the key projects being undertaken over the remainder of this academic year.

It was agreed that the presentation captured well what the college was doing across the remit of digital and information systems. It was acknowledged that data was critical for organisations getting through any sort of change process and the Principal would be delivering a presentation to all staff around being a data driven organisation.

The Chair thanked the Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure for delivering the interesting presentation and commented on the excellent work which was carried out regarding the distribution of laptops to staff and students.

The role of the data scientist and the number of projects he was working on around PowerBi (a Microsoft business intelligence product) was also discussed.

The committee agreed that it would be of benefit if the data scientist and the information systems manager deliver a short presentation at a future board meeting.

Action 2: Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement

7 Internal Audit Report

(i) Cyber Security

The internal auditor presented paper 5.

The report focussed on cyber risks, risk management, governance, and cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

Four grade 2 recommendations (no major weaknesses but scope for improvement) had been identified and assurance had been gained that, in general, the college's operational cyber security procedures reflected good practice.

A small discrepancy in the report was highlighted where the Board of Management was referred to and it was clarified that West Lothian College has a Board of Governors.

The Principal confirmed that a proactive approach is taken by the college regarding scam emails. Regular communications are sent to all college staff.

The committee noted the positive report.

8 Strategic Risk Register

At the last Audit meeting a discussion had taken place about its role in relation to risks that other committees have a responsibility to review. In light of that discussion the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services, in her role as secretary to the board, had produced a risk management responsibilities paper (Appendix 3) outlining each of the committee's risk responsibilities.

A discussion on the paper took place and the committee agreed that the board would have the complete overview of the risk register. The risk register would be a standing agenda item at the Board of Governors meetings and would be a discussion paper. It was also agreed that at the board meeting, assurances would be given from the Audit, Learning and Teaching and Finance and General Purposes Committees that they were satisfied with the risk mitigations

Action 3: Secretary to the Board

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement presented paper 6 which contained the four digital infrastructure risks. It was noted that there had been no change to the risk scores and an explanation had been provided as to why each score had remained unchanged at this point.

Regarding risk 6.2, it was noted that early student withdrawal numbers had in fact went down.

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Regarding risk 6.4, Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement was optimistic that this score could decrease in future.

The Principal advised that the current risk appetite would be reviewed at the risk management workshop and different factors could be considered.

9 College Key Financial Indicators (KPIs) 2020-21

The committee noted the above paper

10 AOB

Sector Update – noted that this had been omitted from the agenda and would be added back on as a standing item.

Action 4: Secretary to the Board

Sector Update - Internal and external auditors both reported that a sector group meeting for Audit Scotland was taking place on Monday 8 March which would be discussing accounting estimates and ongoing work around regional boards.

The Principal updated the committee regarding the national and potential local industrial action that the college was facing at the moment.

11 Review of Meeting, development plan and supporting papers

Due to time restrictions the Chair requested that anything committee members wished to bring up then feel free to email the Chair direct.

12 Date of Next meeting

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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.

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Signed
Chair, Audit Committee

Date