

West Lothian College

14 September 2023

Audit Committee

Meeting of 8 June 2023

Present:

Richard Lockhart (Chair)
Seonaid Crosby (Vice Chair and Non-executive member)
Sue Stahly (Non-executive member)
Rehela Hussain (Non-executive member)

In attendance:

Alex Linkston (Non-executive member)
Jackie Galbraith (Principal)
Beth Brownlee (Head of Quality, Student Support and Learning Resources)
Brian Battison (Audit Scotland)
Gillian Callaghan (Azets, Internal Auditors)
Simon Earp (Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement)
Sarah-Jane Linton (Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment)
Jennifer McLaren (Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services)
Bill Dunsmuir (Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure)
Emily Purdie (Health and Safety Officer)
Tony Sharkey (Non-executive member)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting this was his first meeting as Chair of the Committee. The Chair also welcomed Rehela Hussain to her first meeting.

Apologies were noted from David Eardley of Azets Internal Auditors.

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

1.3 Minutes of Meeting of meeting of 23 February 2023

The Committee approved the minutes as accurate with two changes to attendance:

Jackie Galbraith (Principal) to be noted as In Attendance only

West Lothian College14 September 2023

Seonaid Crosby (Non-executive member) to be noted as an apology.

Action 1: Board Governance Advisor

Minutes of meeting of 23 September 2023 to be amended.

1.4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2 Matters for Committee Approval**2.1 Digital Strategy**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement spoke to the paper and highlighted the 3-year rolling plan which will realise the Strategy.

The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure gave an overview of the Digital Strategy. Committee attention was drawn to the diagram on page 5 which summarises the component parts of the strategy and the links to the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The committee was informed that Cyber Security is at the heart of the strategy to ensure the college is safe, secure and sustainable. The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure discussed the challenges and benefits of artificial intelligence. The Vice Principal, Learning and Attainment informed the committee about the use of artificial intelligence models to help students with study skills such as referencing and research. It was noted there are challenges around maintaining the integrity of assessment as existing plagiarism tools cannot pick up where artificial intelligence is being used.

The committee asked if there is an independent audit of the NIST framework. The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure confirmed this will be subject to external review and discussed the quantitative scores being used within this framework. The committee was informed the college is considering working to achieve ISO accreditation in the future.

The committee commented on the thoroughness of the document and complimented the Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure on the paper.

The Chair noted the ongoing need to monitor costs and the strong message we should give to the Scottish Funding Council with regard to this work. The Principal reported the Scottish Funding Council are well placed in this regard and we are in a good position.

The committee approved the Digital Strategy.

3 Matters for Committee Attention

3.1 Infrastructure and Cyber Security Update

3.1 (i) Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure Update

The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure highlighted the continued investment in infrastructure and confirmed that new network switches will be installed over the summer, building on the server infrastructure work completed last summer.

The committee was informed that Cyber Essentials Plus was achieved on 24 May 2023. Multi factor authentication has been introduced for staff and work is now progressing to introduce multi factor authentication for students.

The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure referred the committee to the update on the new data dashboard and drew committee attention to page 6 which gives an insight into the transformed PowerBi tool.

The Chair noted the good work being done on Cyber Essentials and the benefits this could have for future commercial contract work.

3.2 Health and Safety Update (Quarterly Report)

The Health and Safety Officer talked to the quarterly report, noting that we are still using pre-Covid stats for this report.

EP has taken responsibility for co-ordination of first aiders. The committee heard the draft bill to implement Martin's Law has been released and there are questions about how this will apply to the Further Education sector. This will establish regulations to be met for events and training needed for staff. The College will be required to register with a regulator but guidance is awaited on this.

The committee was informed the Air Monitoring and Noise Testing reports are now available. Faculties are working to address identified actions. The committee was informed that air monitoring did not raise any concerns and noise levels are being managed with appropriate PPE.

West Lothian College14 September 2023

The Health and Safety Officer noted a few procedures to be reviewed over the summer and confirmed that toolbox talks have been completed for staff training.

EP reported this was her last meeting as she is moving on to a new role at Stirling University. The Committee thanked the Health and Safety Officer for her work over the last few years and wished her well. The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services assured the committee there are interim arrangements in place for health and safety pending recruitment to the post.

3.4 Internal Audit

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services gave an update on the Internal Audit Plan and informed the committee that a draft plan for 2023-24 will be brought to the next meeting.

Azets Internal Auditors then took the committee through key points from the audit reports:

3.4 (i) Quality Assurance Processes Report

The focus of the Quality Assurance Internal Audit was on Internal Verification across the college. The committee heard this is a clean report with no areas for improvement identified.

3.4 (ii) IT Support Helpdesk Report

Azets Internal Auditors noted that the main recommendations for improvement have been adopted by the college. The committee will see progress in implementing these recommendations in the college rolling action plan.

3.4 (iii) Core Financial Systems Report

The internal audit focused specifically on budgetary control and creditor payments. The committee was informed that this is a clean report identifying robust processes are in place. It was noted that there was one area for improvement in relation to documentation of the budgetary control process but that this is not a point for concern.

The committee were reassured that processes are robust and noted the reports.

3.5 College Rolling Audit Action Plan

West Lothian College14 September 2023

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services reported that all actions are on track for completion.

The committee was content to note the report.

3.6 External Audit Update**3.6 (i) Annual Audit Plan 2022-23**

The Chair of Audit Committee welcomed Brian Battison of Audit Scotland to the meeting and noted that this is the start of Audit Scotland's 5-year appointment.

Audit Scotland highlighted page 5 of the plan, informing the committee the plan has been developed based on levels of financial materiality. Audit Scotland emphasised the college is in the low risk category.

Audit Scotland discussed pages 6 and 7, exhibit 2 of the plan, which notes the significant risks identified for this audit and areas of focus. The valuation of pensions on page 8 of the plan was discussed as a significant risk and therefore another area of focus. The committee noted that cyber security risks are included in the plan.

Audit Scotland discussed the audit timetable and confirmed the aim will be to report to Audit Committee in November and to the Board of Governors meeting in December. However, Audit Scotland highlighted possible issues in achieving this timetable as they are new to the college and it may be challenging to complete the work to the target deadline. The committee noted that it will be a concern if the timetable slips and queried how this affects reporting for subsequent years. Audit Scotland agreed there is more work involved in the first year but reporting for recurring audit years should meet agreed deadlines.

It was also noted that Fiona Owens has moved to another job role and will no longer be part of the audit.

The committee noted the plan.

3.7 Key Performance Indicators**3.7 (i) Complaints Report**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the standard complaints report, noting the drop in reported complaints to 20 as opposed to 24 in 2021-22. 16 complaints were upheld and closed off in the required timescale. The

West Lothian College14 September 2023

committee was informed there are no patterns to complaints that are causing concern.

The committee heard that the final day of evidence in the outstanding legal case took place on Friday 2 June 2023 and 16 June 2023 will be the last day of court attendance. However, it was noted that it may be a further four months before the final decision is given.

The committee was content to note this report.

4 Matters for Information**4.1 College Sector Performance Indicators**

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement discussed the paper and confirmed the performance indicators will be considered in detail by the Learning and Teaching Committee. The committee noted the college's very strong performance in the sector.

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement noted that the college is not complacent and there is always room for improvement. College managers are considering the statistics at a more granular level to identify and action any areas where improvement can still be made.

The Committee noted the paper and congratulated the college on this performance.

4.2 Risk Register – matters for escalation or note

The Chair informed the committee there were no significant escalations to any of the key risks in the current register.

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services confirmed the 2023-24 risk register will be presented to the Board of Governors meeting on 20 June 2023. This is based on the new tolerances agreed by the Board at the Risk Management Workshop held on 11 May 2023.

The committee was content to note the verbal update.

5 Any Other Business**5.1 Revised Committee Remit**

The Committee discussed the responsibilities noted in the revised remit, and noted the following points for amendment:

West Lothian College14 September 2023

Meetings:

Include an item to encourage member attendance at Strategy Events

Responsibilities:

The committee discussed their role in advising the Board on Whistleblowing and agreed the committee does not have sufficient information on this item. It was agreed that the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services should add this as an item in the Freedom of Information Report to provide further detail for the committee's information.

Reporting Procedures:

Item to be added to clarify the Committee shall recommend relevant documents to the Board for final approval.

Action 2: Board Governance Advisor

Amend the Committee Remit to reflect committee discussion.

Action 3: Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services

Include Whistleblowing data in future Freedom of Information Reports

The Committee approved the revised remit with the noted amendments.

6 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The Committee commented positively on the quality of papers presented to the meeting.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday 14 September 2023 at 10.30 am.

8 Committee Self-Assessment

Non-executive members of the committee remained at the end of the meeting to participate in a self-assessment workshop. The committee discussed key elements of the Good Governance framework, relevant to the Audit Committee, and noted areas of strength and areas for development. Committee feedback was recorded and will inform the Board Development Plan for 2023-24.

West Lothian College

14 September 2023

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

Signed
Chair, Audit Committee

Date