

Audit Committee

Minute of Meeting of 14 September 2023

Present:

Richard Lockhart (Chair, Non-executive member)
Seonaid Crosby (Vice-Chair and Non-executive member)
Rehela Hussain (Non-executive member)
Shelagh Fraser (Support Staff member)

In attendance:

Jackie Galbraith (Principal)
Brian Battison (Audit Scotland)
David Eardley (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)
Derek O'Sullivan (Head of HR and People Development)
Jenny Stalker (Board Secretary and Governance Advisor)

1 Committee Administration

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2023-24. Shelagh Fraser was welcomed to her first meeting as Support Staff member.

Apologies were noted from Sue Stahly (Non-executive member) and Alex Linkston (Non-executive member in attendance only).

1.2 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest noted.

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting of 8 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2023 were accepted as a correct record with the following adjustments:

It was agreed that Seonaid Crosby should be noted as Vice Chair of the Committee.

Action 1 was noted as an amendment to the meeting of 23 February 2023.

Audit Scotland requested the sentence referring to the audit fee be removed. The committee agreed to remove the sentence.

1.4 Matters Arising

The committee noted that all matters arising had been completed.

2 Matters for Committee Attention

2.1 Infrastructure and Cyber Security Update

(i) Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure Report

The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure highlighted the re-styling of reporting to link key aims to the digital strategy. The updated document will be published within next few weeks.

The committee was informed that additional funding of £83k to address digital poverty has been received from the Scottish Funding Council. The committee heard the college is looking carefully at how the money to build the asset register. The criteria for use of the money has not changed and the committee will receive an update on the use of the funding at the November meeting.

The committee was informed that cyber security work is progressing after agreeing terms and conditions with the supplier. A statement of works is now agreed and will be completed during the October holiday break to minimise disruption to learning. Multi factor authentication for students is progressing well.

The committee heard the college is continuing with an ambitious online services development plan for this academic year which will include a centralised timetabling solution for the college to be implemented 2024-25.

The centralised timetabling system was discussed. The committee was informed this will be an in-house development, written by the college in-house team. The committee asked if other existing systems had been considered. It was confirmed the Systems Development Group had assessed other systems and it was agreed that we should keep our own key systems in-

house. The committee asked if we are able to utilise the commerciality of our own systems development to secure additional income. The Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure confirmed we would investigate that.

The committee noted the Student Induction survey is live and has returned over 1,000 responses after just three weeks of student attendance. This is providing an early insight into how students are feeling and managing on course.

The committee noted that the work on the Induction Survey is excellent and asked that the committee is informed of the outcomes of the survey and evidence of the impact of early interventions made as a result of this early feedback.

Action 1: Head of Information Systems and Digital Infrastructure

To bring an executive summary of impact of Induction Feedback on student withdrawals to the next committee meeting.

The committee noted that CCTV work will be carried out during the October break but enquired about possible disruption to support staff working during that week. The committee was informed there may be some potential disruption and that staff will be kept informed as work progresses.

2.2 Health and Safety Update (Quarterly Report)

The committee discussed the Health and Safety Quarterly Report presented, noting that accident and incident numbers are reduced on the previous year.

The committee discussed the recent Business Continuity exercise that highlighted a number of required actions.

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services informed the committee the college has always carried out an annual test with Zurich Insurance to test the Business Continuity Plan. The scenario used this year was based on PREVENT and the college had anticipated gaps in procedure due to this being a new area of focus.

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement highlighted that recommendations had not been reviewed at the time of writing the Health and Safety report, noting that the new team overseeing

business continuity has been established and would be meeting in the following week.

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement confirmed that steps have now been taken to address the recommendations. The committee noted a further business continuity exercise is due to take place on 8 November 2023 with the full management team.

The Health and Safety Officer confirmed she is working with Police Scotland to identify training for staff to tie in with PREVENT recommendations and to develop a plan for next year.

The committee heard the new insurance company will undertake a further business continuity exercise in June 2024.

The committee noted that ownership of actions should be noted along with a timeline plan and a re-test should be carried out before June 2024 to mitigate risks. The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement confirmed names have now been allocated against actions and an updated report will be brought to the next meeting. The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services also confirmed there is an assigned lead for business continuity within the Risk Register.

Action 2: Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement

To bring an updated action plan to next committee meeting on 30 November 2023.

The Health and Safety Officer discussed the various initiatives that took place to July 2023, including Fire Marshall training and staff training carried out through The Scheme on dealing with drugs and drug overdose. The committee was informed the college has now been given a supply of Naloxone to administer in the event of a drug overdose. The committee also heard fire alarm procedures have been changed to meet the new fire brigade requirements to identify an actual fire before call outs are made.

The committee noted that health and safety procedures will continue to be reviewed and updated.

The PREVENT Report was discussed and the committee noted the majority of actions are green.

The committee asked if RAAC was a concern to the college. The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that our buildings do not contain RAAC and a return has been made to the Scottish Funding Council to reflect this.

The committee asked that a communication is sent to staff to keep staff informed on the situation.

Action 3: Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services

To ensure a communication goes out to staff on the college position on RAAC.

3 Audit Reporting

3.1 Internal Audit: Progress against plan and reports

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services noted the internal audit programme for 2023-24. The Learner Journey is being renamed Assessment and will be reported on in Sept 2024. The IT Strategy will be reported on in March 2024.

Azets Internal Auditors discussed the revised audit programme for 2023-24.

The committee discussed the two key reports presented to the committee which completed the 2022-23 plan.

(i) HR Staff Induction and Onboarding

Azets noted the key points from the report and confirmed the committee can be assured the college has robust process design and implementation.

Points for improvement were discussed. The committee noted the action to reinforce written procedures and to make these available to staff.

The mandatory training report was noted. The committee noted the importance of mandatory training and to ensure that we continue to work towards 100% compliance.

The committee noted the timeline for the next Internal Audit of Board Effectiveness as March 2026 and agreed to undertake aspects of board effectiveness prior to the actual audit:

- Board induction
- Board enrolment
- Self-evaluation
- Succession planning

(ii) Internal Audit Annual Report

Azets confirmed this is a clean report based on the internal audit work done. The committee was assured there is reasonable assurance in the college framework of controls.

3.2 External Audit Update

Audit Scotland confirmed the plan presented to the last audit committee still stands. The main work will commence during October 2023. Audit Scotland confirmed work carried out to date has included communications with Azets, the college and Lothian Pension Fund.

3.3 College Rolling Audit Action Plan

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services discussed the 5 recommendations within the plan and confirmed these are on target to complete or are completed.

The committee was content to note this report.

4 General Compliance

4.1 Internal reports

(i) Staff Mandatory Training

The Head of HR and People Development discussed the content of mandatory training report and confirmed 92% of staff fully completed the 2022-23 training. Those who did not complete received letters instructing them to complete this year's training early by 6 October 2023.

The committee asked if all new staff have completed or if non-completion was an issue with longer serving staff. The Head of HR and People Development confirmed it was possible to examine the data and report on this.

The committee thanked the Head of HR and People Development for the quality of the report.

(ii) GDPR Update 2022-23

The Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services highlighted that a section on whistleblowing had been included in this report as requested by the committee.

There were no comments on this and the committee was content to note the report.

(iii) Complaints Report

The Vice Principal, Performance and Improvement confirmed the two outstanding complaints are still open as students have yet to reply back to the college. The committee noted the complaints will be closed off after students are given a further opportunity to respond to the college.

The committee heard that Action Short of Strike (ASOS) led to a rise in complaints. The committee was assured the college is making considerable efforts to make sure any impact on student outcomes from ASOS is mitigated as far as possible.

The committee was informed we have yet to hear the outcome of the ongoing legal action. The committee thanked the staff for their continued participation in this.

The chair noted that a key to Faculty and Services acronyms should be included in reports for the benefit of the committee.

Action 4: Vice Principal, Performance Improvement

To include a key to Faculty and Service names in future reports.

5 Matters for Information

5.1 Sector Update

Azets Internal Auditors noted the key concerns around RAAC and the pension situation had already been discussed. Azets discussed the ongoing financial difficulties being experienced across the sector and which are impacting on the curriculum in some colleges.

Azets confirmed that training is on Sustainable Development Goals is being offered as a free development session for Board Members. The training will be held in Glasgow Central Hotel in October 2023.

Action 5: Board Secretary and Governance Advisor

To circulate invitation to board members.

Audit Scotland discussed sector wide messaging regarding assets valuations.

The Principal asked for Audit Scotland's view on their recent report on colleges. Audit Scotland agreed to give a presentation on the report to the next meeting in November 2023.

Action 6: Audit Scotland

To give a presentation on the Audit Scotland Report to the committee meeting of 23 November 2023.

The Principal discussed the ongoing industrial action situation and confirmed the Chair of the Board has stated there will be no compulsory redundancies in West Lothian College.

5.2 Risk Register – Any Matters for escalation or update

The committee noted the previous discussion on Business Continuity and the update on this to be included in the risk register.

The committee discussed Risk 1.3 relating to Net Zero and the potential impact on funding pots as a result of Government funding potentially being diverted to address RAAC issues across the sector.

6 Any Other Business

The committee heard the college has been shortlisted for nine awards at the CDN Awards ceremony on 30 November 2023 as well as the Green Gown Sustainability Awards to be held in Liverpool.

The committee noted the college's success and passed on their congratulations to staff and students.

The committee were reminded that faculty tour dates have been offered to board members.

7 Review of Committee and Supporting Papers

The committee agreed that papers are improving and particularly liked the Digital Infrastructure report aims being linked to strategic aims. The committee found the summaries from Azets and Audit Scotland useful.

The committee agreed that the number of papers presented was acceptable and information provided was sufficiently detailed. The committee commented that it would be useful for the agenda to be sent separately to papers.

The committee also noted it would be useful if the agenda itself could flag where papers are for approval, attention or note.

8 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday 30 November 2023 commencing at 10.30 am.

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: