

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 5 February 2024 at 4.30pm

Present physically at WSC:	J Wakelam, Vice Chair	K Chapman, Chair
Present virtually:	J Gazzard (part) M Searcey	R Hetherington
In attendance:	A Brewster, Group Head of Finance A McGarel, CFO C Shepherd, Group Audit and Risk Officer L Carroll, Group Head of Project Accounting, Risk and Transformation L Cox, Scrutton Bland M Chatt, Interim CFO N Savvas, CEO (part) P Ewan, Head of Finance S Gales, Governance Professional S Graham, CPO S Hope, Group Director Compliance	
Apologies:	H Nydam, co-opted S Mason, RSM	
Absences:	N Roberts, co-opted	

1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

J Wakelam declared her role as a Trustee of Suffolk Academies Trust. No conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

The Chair welcomed R Hetherington as a new member of the Committee and L Carroll and S Hope as new attendees of the Committee.

Apologies were accepted from H Nydam and S Mason. The absence of N Roberts was noted.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record, subject to the addition of R Hetherington as a 'Governor in attendance'.

3. Matters Arising from meeting on 20 November 2023

Six of the matters arising from the previous meeting were complete and/or closed, three were ongoing.

The Vice Chair fed back following attending the Sustainability (Executive) Board and progress to net-zero (linked to Matters Arising 2).

The Chair informed of plans (linked to Matters Arising 5 and 12) to create a Group-wide strategic Risk Register and discussed plans to convene a discussion group around Easter.

4. Risk Management Update

There are currently **1 red**, **9 amber**, **15 yellow** risks on the register. 1 risk has been added (WSCR067) and 1 risk has been removed (WSCR028) from the register; 2 risks have changed post-mitigation score (WSCR021 and WSCR064).

Governors discussed the proposed removal WSCR028 (relating to GDPR compliance) and queried if there was sufficient assurance to warrant this. S Graham explained the risk mitigations and pro-active management sufficiently reduce the risk rating to be

Action

Gov. Prof.

Chair
Gov. Prof.

classed as 'green' and therefore it has been removed from the Corporation's risk register, though remains on the College's operational risk register.

Governors discussed WSCR062 (relating to use of AI) and whether the post-mitigation risk rating should be higher and asked the EEG Educational Excellence Committee to consider.

Governors discussed RSM's Emerging Risk report and noted we need to consider which of these wider environmental risks should be added to the Risk Register. The Chair advised this will be considered by the discussions group.

EEG EEC

J Gazzard joined the meeting at 5.00pm

Governors discussed WSCR005 (relating to AEB income) and noted the risk would reduce student experience/breadth of courses, so should link to 'Our Students' (strategic plan priority).

C Shepherd

Governors discussed the feedback from the specialist Committee's review of the Risk Register extract and noted the need for this Committee to triangulate their feedback, with the Internal Auditor's Findings Reports to inform decisions about the Risk Register. The Chair advised this will be considered by the discussions group.

The Committee discussed the macro risk environment and noted we need to prioritise our finite resources to maximum effect linked to our strategic priorities

Governors **agreed to recommend** the Risk Register to the Corporation, subject to noting that work is underway to identify additional Group-wide strategic risks.

CFO

5. Audit Recommendations Tracking Report

Governors received and considered the tracking report which shows that of the 13 recommendations; 6 are complete and 7 are ongoing.

The Chair advised that, after consideration by this Committee, Internal Auditor's Findings Reports will be circulated to the appropriate specialist Committee(s) (like the Risk Register extract) for the specialist Committees to consider the management response and implementation timeframe and either convey the Committee's assurance or indicate rationale for additional concern to the Governance Professional for communication/escalation to this Committee; and as/when appropriate propose any additional areas the Committee would welcome additional Internal Audit assurance on.

6. Internal Auditor's Findings Report

i. **Progress report**

Governors received and considered the tracking report. L Cox confirmed that the Internal Audits of 'T-Level Implementation' and 'Budget Setting and Control' are underway.

ii. **Follow up of previous actions**

Governors received and considered the internal audit which took place in December 2023 and noted the grade of **limited progress** and that there are four medium risk and the eleven low risk recommendations ongoing.

L Cox advised that the progress grade arises from the incomplete medium risk recommendations and noted an additional 'follow up of previous actions' audit will take place before the end of the academic year.

Governors queried recommendation 13 (relating to IT Infrastructure) and queried if there is a risk of data breaches. L Cox advised there wasn't.

Governors queried recommendation 10 (relating to IT Infrastructure) and queried who the Service Level Agreement was with. L Cox explained this.

L Carroll noted that since this report was circulated, 4 recommendations have now been completed and will be included in the next report.

iii. **Marketing**

Governors received and considered the internal audit which took place in December 2023 and commended the grade of **strong assurance** with no recommendations. L Cox summarised the report and the value-added point.

iv. **16-18 recruitment**

Governors received and considered the internal audit which took place in January 2024 and noted the grade of **significant assurance** and the two low risk recommendations. L Cox summarised the report and the value-added point.

Governors discussed the College's conversion rates for applied vs. enrolled and the offered vs. enrolled and queried how this compared to other FE Colleges. L Cox advised the College's conversion rates are high compared to other FE Colleges.

N Savvas left the meeting at 5.40pm

v. **HE recruitment**

Governors received and considered the internal audit which took place in December 2023 and noted the grade of **reasonable assurance** and the one medium risk and the five low risk recommendations. L Cox summarised the report and the value-added point.

Governors fed back that the HE Educational Excellence Committee are alert to the need for an HE recruitment strategy.

vi. **Control Account Reconciliations**

Governors received and considered the internal audit which took place in January 2024 and noted the grade of **reasonable assurance** and the one medium risk and the two low risk recommendations.

7. **GDPR update**

Governors received and considered the report provided and S Hope summarised the key information.

Governors queried the process for Data Subject Access Requests. The CPO answered this.

Governors commended the progress of the team in promoting GDPR compliance and a culture of pro-active disclosure/reporting of breaches.

8. **Review of Committee membership suitability**

Governors received and considered the report provided and the Governance Professional summarised the key information.

The Chair advised that if members would like additional training to liaise with the Governance Professional.

9. **Any Other Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 5.50pm