



AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Thursday 21 March 2024

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Board Room / Video Conference

Present:

Andrew Fawcett (Chair)

Julian Coleman

Chris Ball

In Attendance:

Bill Webster (Principal)

Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)

Tim Openshaw (AVC, UoB)

Danny Harvey (PwC)

Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)

Jill Hebden (Minute Taker)

1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

1.1 Welcome to Members/Officers

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, which commenced at 5.02pm.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Farhad Ahmad and Sharon White.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. There were no declarations of interest.

1.4 Request for an item to be unstarred

No requests were made.

1.5* Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held 30 November 2023 had been previously circulated to Committee Members for consideration.

Agreed: that the minutes are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication.

1.6 Matters arising from the previous minutes

The Clerk presented the action progress log and noted that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

2.1 Internal Audit Progress 2023/24

PwC provided an update on the internal audit progress, noting that despite the delays experienced due to resource issues, PwC were 'on track' to complete the intended audit activities for this academic year:

- Managing Public Money – this piece of work had been delayed until the financial handbook had been provided; the handbook had just been released.
- Estate's maintenance – the audit scope had been issued.
- Learner recruitment – the audit scope had been issued.
- HE learner experience – due to the volume of learners in HE the review had been amended to look at the controls and structures surrounding agency staffing

PwC informed the Committee that the University had requested a change to the programme of work. A review of asset management had been replaced with a review of the insurance arrangements that would look across the Group more broadly.

Governor Questions/Comments:

- *Where did the issues with resources lie in undertaking the programme of audits?*
Largely on PwC and staff resources, although the activity planned for the Managing Public Money was outside of our control. The scope of work for each audit are out which have not yet commenced. However, we are confident that we will catch up on this quickly.
- *Scrutinising expenditure on agency staff is critical. What do we envisage the scope of the agency staff audit to be?*
The draft scope has been shared however this can be amended if focus would be preferable in other areas. The current scope looks to review how agencies are approved and the contracts that are in place, including the rates attached and also approving individual spend items and the process undertaken by the College.
- *Is the College content with completing the remaining programmes of work in the time remaining?*
Yes, there is a plan in place and the programmes sit across a number of senior managers.
- *Given the critical importance of agency provision to the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) Task and Finish Group, should the scope be taken to this group to review?*
The Task and Finish Group relates to the PIAP, whilst there are implications there is it not the right place. If another Group or Committee was to review the scope, it would fit best with the Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the internal audit progress report.

ACTION:

Agency staff audit scope to be provided and reviewed by the Resources Committee.

2.2 Outstanding Audit Recommendations: Monitoring Schedule

The Executive Director of Finance presented the monitoring schedule, highlighting the following points:

- Progress continued with the exception of those impacted until receipt of the Managing Public Money (MPM) handbook, which could not commence.
- There were many controls with the MPM handbook. There were 'catch all' controls such as 'novel, contentious and repercussive' which could cause difficulties if breached.
- Guidance referrals/approvals were currently taking 2 – 6 months.

RESOLVED:

The Committee reviewed and noted the outstanding audit recommendations report.

ACTION:

Circulate MPM handbook to Audit Committee and Resources Committee members.

2.3 Sub-contracting Activity Review

The Principal presented the sub-contracting Activity report noting the following points:

- A review of the College subcontracting arrangement had been presented to the Standards and Quality Committee on 13 March 2024.
- Assurance was provided that the subcontracting arrangement with Shockout Arts continued to fulfil the requirements of the Board ie. it being a strategic Group imperative, the organisation was financially robust and that the quality of provision remained excellent, as reflected at the latest self-assessment review.
- The engagement between the College and Shockout Arts remained very positive. The feedback from Ofsted regarding Shockout Arts was very strong.
- The College had agreed for Shockout Arts to increase their enrolments to a total of 75 learners per year.

RESOLVED:

The Committee reviewed and noted the sub-contracting activity review report.

2.4 Risk Management / Risk Register

The risk management annual report that summarised the College's approach to risk was presented and discussed and the following key points noted:

- There was a significant element on the register regarding Ofsted and the financial risks.

- Risk was a standing item at Senior Management Team meetings with anything significant discussed and reflected in the risk register.

The Principal thanked the AVC Planning for the work undertaken on the continual updating of the risk register noting that it remained a 'live' document.

Governor Questions/Comments:

- *Given the Ofsted report and the focus of activity, should English and maths be RAG rated as 'red' as opposed to 'amber'?*

Yes, this will be updated.

- *There is no specific reference within the risk summary of the over reliance on agency staff for the delivery of curriculum.*

It may not be mentioned in that specific way however it is the focus of a large amount of work that the senior management team are undertaking within the PIAP.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update to the Risk Management / Risk Register and that it was an accurate reflection of the risks and how those risks were being addressed.

2.5 Starred Items

(i) *Anti-Bribery Policy

The Clerk presented the Anti-Bribery Policy for approval by the Committee and noted that no amendments had been made from the previous version.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Anti-Bribery Policy and recommended it for Board approval.

ACTION:

Clerk / Board Agenda

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

The Assistant Vice Chancellor (Planning) noted the official OfS opening of the name change consultation with regards to the University of Bolton.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 ESFA Policy / Funding Rules / Conditions of Grant Changes

This was a standing item on the agenda to discuss noteworthy matters. The Executive Director of Finance noted that there was nothing to update the Committee on at this point and that the financial regulations would be reported on at the next Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:



The Committee noted the update provided.

4.2 Meeting Evaluation

Committee members agreed that they were provided the opportunity to challenge and request further details where necessary.

5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 6 June 2024 at 5.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 5.40pm

Chair's Signature:

Date: 6 June 2024