MINUTES

AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Thursday 24 March 2022

Time: 5.00pm

Venue: Board Room / Video Conference

Present:
Andrew Fawcett (Chair)
Chris Ball
Stephanie Nixon

In Attendance:
Bill Webster (Principal)
Garry Westwater (Executive Director of Finance)
Tim Openshaw (Assistant Vice Chancellor, Planning & Student Experience) (UoB)
Jane Forbes (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 5.06pm.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Gulnaz Brennan and Farhad Ahmad.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

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 2 November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held 2 November 2021 had been previously circulated to 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 had been completed.

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

2.1 Internal Audit Reports

(i) Health & Safety:

PwC presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The audit reviewed the governance of the health and safety management functions, policies and procedures, processes, training requirements, reporting mechanisms and how the College discharged its responsibilities.
- The review identified that the College had clear processes that were covered by regular reporting with defined roles and responsibilities.
- Findings to be reviewed included updating the health and safety policy, to complete a biennial review of the risk assessment and include trend analysis to enhance current reporting.
- The Principal reported that the University undertook a Group health and safety assurance review that did not overlay the College health and safety provision but provided an additional level of scrutiny.
- A regular health and safety update would be reported to the Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the audit recommendations.

(ii) Budgeting and Forecasting

PwC presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The audit reviewed the governance over the development and approval of financial forecasts and how financial performance was monitored.
- Scenario planning and modelling was strongly recommended to enable informed decision making although it was recognised the complexity involved to do so given the range of variables to be considered.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the audit recommendations.

ACTION:

Scenario planning to be discussed at the next Resources Committee.

(iii) Progress Report 2021/22

Half of the reviews had been completed with no changes proposed for the remainder of the audit programme.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the progress report for 2021/22.

The Committee thanked PwC for their continued work at the College and the actions to be taken.

(Jane Forbes left the meeting at 5.22pm)

2.2 Outstanding Audit Recommendations: Monitoring Schedule

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

- The College had partially accepted the risk around petty cash under working capital due to a lack of available resources.
- Following the latest internal audit reviews there were eight new recommendations that were to be taken forward.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the outstanding audit recommendations report.

2.3 External Auditors

The Executive Director of Finance informed the Committee that the external audit provision was out to tender with a closing date of 25 March 2022 for submissions. Early indications showed that there would be a number of submissions for review.

2.4 Sub-Contracting Activity Review

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

- The conditions of sub-contracting, as agreed by the Board, had been adhered to ie. Group strategic imperative with established financial robustness.
- Shockout Arts remained the sole sub-contracting activity for the College and continued to be a high quality and high performing provider as evidenced by its self-assessment report.

RESOLVED:

The Committee reviewed the Sub-Contracting Activity Review and noted that it was good to see that it was integrated into the College quality processes.

2.5 Risk Management / Risk Register

The risk management annual report which summarised the College's approach to risk was presented and discussed.

- There were more changes to the risk register due to a longer reporting period.
- A number of risks had been revised, mainly in relation to adult education funding and maths and English. Maths and English had been discussed at length at the Board and Resources Committee that had resulted in a University and College task and finish working group.

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.

2.6 Starred Items

(i) *Anti-Bribery Policy

The Clerk had reviewed the Anti-Bribery Policy in keeping with best practice that was aligned with the University of Bolton policy. Members had received and reviewed the Anti-Bribery Policy.

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

ESFA / FEC Section 28 Designation Review

The Principal reported that the Section 28 review had concluded. The FE Commissioner's Office and ESFA representatives had interviewed Board members, executives, staff and students from the College and University. Initial feedback had been very positive in terms of distance travelled and the efficacy of the Group.

The review highlighted the strength of governance, governor exchange and transparency that provided a high level of confidence in the integration and would be a recommendation for any future college/University models.

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 following was noted:

- The College had received the grant funding letter for T Levels and should recruitment targets be met would provide a significant financial uplift.
- The Skills Accelerator Progression Funding would look for combined institutional bid submissions.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update provided.

4.2 Matrix Accreditation Review

The Principal reported on a successful external inspection review for the re-accreditation of the Matrix Standard (the sector kite mark for information, advice and guidance). The review report, to be presented to the Board, confirmed that all previous identified strengths had remained with new strengths identified. The matrix accreditation was important as it demonstrated that the College provided independent and impartial advice.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update provided.

ACTION:

Matrix Accreditation Review report to be presented to the Board.

5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 9th June 2022 at 5.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 5.46pm

Chair's Signature:

Date: 9 June 2022