

**Tuesday 16th May 2023 at 5.30pm
Remote Online Meeting**

Present:

Mr Somayina Ebele - Chair of the Committee
Mr Dave Navarro – Foundation Governor

Invited attendees:

Ms Clare Baskott – Clerk to Governors
Mrs C Biscoe, Partner, Buzzacott LLP, External Auditors for items 1 – 10
Mr Paul Goddard – Representative Scrutton Bland for items 1-9 1.
Mrs Eleanor Lewis – Clerk to Governors
Mrs Margaret Searle, Director of Finance and Resources
Mr Graham Thompson, Principal

Apologies:

Mrs Bernadette Meier – Foundation Governor
Mr Chukwuweta Uraih – Foundation Governor

**All reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.
The meeting was quorate for items 1 to 14.1**

Minutes

Item 1 Opening prayer

The Principal opened the meeting in prayer at 5:38pm.

Item 2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Bernadette Meier and Chukwuweta Uraih.

Item 3 Declarations of interest

None.

Item 4 Committee time with Auditors

None.

Item 5 Minutes of meeting held on 28th February 2023: Draft circulated 21st March 2023 (and included in papers) for agreement and signing

The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the previous meeting, which will be signed in due course.

Item 6 Matters arising, not covered by agenda items: Whistleblowing Policy

The recommended changes had been made to the Whistleblowing Policy which will be submitted for final approval by the Full Governing Body at the meeting on 4th July 2023. Clerk to add to the agenda. **Action: Clerk.**

The Committee agreed that the revised policy was well balanced in order to prevent vexatious claims, whilst encouraging staff to raise any concerns.

Item 7 Action points from previous meeting

Covered above.

Item 8 Updated Post 16 Audit Code of Practice 2022 to 2023: To receive updated code (in papers) and note changes to requirements (listed on page 5)

The Committee noted the additional work required for external and internal audits. The External Auditor, Paul Goddard from Scrutton Bland, explained that the revised Letter of Engagement reflected the changes. The Committee noted that fraud now had a higher profile in the updated Audit Code of Practice (ACoP).

Item 9 IAS (Internal Audit Service) Scrutton Bland: Presentation and review of Learner Number System assignment report

Paul Goodard from auditors, Scrutton Bland, gave an update and thanked staff at the college for their assistance during the audit. Paul Goddard reported a good level of compliance across the college and noted the good processes and practice in place. There were no concerns related to benchmarking. An issue that had been highlighted regarding staff signatures missing from a number of Learning Agreements; which should be signed within six weeks of enrolment.

Governor question: What is the root cause of why staff are not signing the Learning Agreements?

Response: The main issue is that the college is still asking Tutors to sign the agreements. Other colleges have opened up the signing of these agreements to a wider pool of staff including the Enrolment Officer and support staff. A number of colleges have digitised the agreements in order to streamline the process. It also may be that some staff in the college have not understood the importance of signing these agreements.

Governor question: Is it a legal requirement that the Learning Agreements are signed?

Response: It is a requirement of the Education, Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) that both parties sign the agreement.

It was agreed that the College will open up the pool of staff who can sign the Learning Agreements in the future.

Governor question: Is there a risk of clawback because the Learning Agreements were not signed?

Response: It is a very small risk and any clawback is unlikely. Obtaining the signatures can be easily remedied.

A discussion took place about the processes in place for signing and collating the Learning Agreements.

The Chair of the Committee referred to an issue caused by last minute changes to T Level enrolment/transfers on enrolment day. The Auditor explained that this was a first-time event and the college had since implemented procedural changes to ensure that it would not occur again in September 2023.

The Auditor reported that the college was in a strong position, with no high-risk concerns and commended staff on the high quality of documentation which was promptly provided following his request.

Paul Goddard left the meeting at 5:58pm.

Item 10. Regularity and Financial Statements Audits: Buzzacott

Catherine Biscoe, Partner, Buzzacott LLP, External Auditors gave an overview of the plan as outlined in the Audit Plan documents.

The External Auditor referred to page ,5 detailing the scope of the audits: and explained that key changes will be linked to the Managing Public Money requirements of the ONS reclassification. The updated engagement letter takes into account changes following the ONS reclassification. The updated College Financial Management Handbook was not expected to be published until March 2024. The external audit fees were outlined on page 12.

The External Auditor explained that Buzzacott LLP, had been the colleges' audit engagement partner for the last ten years and there was a risk of familiarity and additional measures will be put in place to mitigate these potential risks.

A discussion took place about the internal audit. The external auditor explained that they worked closely with Scrutton Bland and often assess samples of their audits, in order to reduce the scope of what was needed for similar external audits.

The external audit strategy was accepted.

The committee thanked the External Auditor for the update.

Catherine Biscoe left the meeting at 6:09pm.

Item 10.1. Audit plan for year ending 31st July 2023 (in papers)

Covered above.

Item 10.2. Regularity Self-Assessment process (questionnaire in papers)

The Director of Finance and Resources explained that she will work on the Regularity Self-Assessment process with the Clerk in the autumn term prior to the auditors beginning their work, and this will be reviewed by the Audit Committee. The main update will be the ONS reclassification.

10.3. Letter of engagement with Buzzacott

It was agreed that this will be forwarded to the Chair of the Committee by email following the meeting. **Action: Clerk/Director of Finance and Resources.**

Item 11. Risk Management:**Item 11.1. Updates to full register for note Item 11.2. Principal to present verbal report on key active internal controls and emerging risks.**

The Principal reported that there had not been any significant changes to the order of risk in the risk register. Minor changes since the spring risk register had been highlighted. The Principal reported that student recruitment remained the number one risk. The college had introduced an 'Applicant Experience Day' which was scheduled to take place on 30th June 2023. The college was introducing a Cricket Academy to attract new students.

The impact of the new College's Financial Management Handbook in March 2024 could impact on the college, as the proposed changes were not yet known.

The college had invested in high quality learner voice software in order to gain better data from parents and governors.

Governor question: Are there any insights from the 'Student Voice' survey?

Response: The survey for leavers is still on-going and the findings will be reported to the CSQ meeting in June. We have trialled a parent voice survey and received positive feedback, with 300 respondents taking part.

Industrial action

The Principal referred to page 17 and the continued industrial action by teaching staff. The NASUWT had recently balloted their members and the NEU had indicated additional action will take place at the end of June and/or July. The annual pay award had not yet been agreed and industrial action was expected to continue into the autumn term.

Cyber Security

Cyber Essentials had recently expired and were being renewed by the IT department. The College was looking at using Cyber Essentials Plus for the future.

Ofsted

The college was due to have an Ofsted inspection and preparations were in place.

Catholic Ethos

The Principal reported that the college was pleased with the work of the college Chaplains, and eight students had recently been confirmed.

Fire Safety

A Fire Safety audit had been scheduled to take place in July 2023.

Governor question: Has a lockdown drill recently taken place?

Response: We have not had a recent lockdown drill and the procedure needs to be updated. It is important that we are confident in our lockdown procedure before we undertake a lockdown drill.



Item 12. Internal Audit Action Report

The Director of Finance and Resources gave an update.

It was agreed that in future, the actual actions taken to address issues will be included. **Action: Director of Finance and Resources.**

It was agreed that at the next meeting enrolment issues and any details of actions taken to mitigate the issues will be included. **Action: Director of Finance and Resources.**

Item 13. Board Assurance Framework: Confirmation that the committee is satisfied that the controls are adequate, and the cycle of assurance reviews is effective to give the appropriate assurance to the Governing Body. (Latest updated version in papers).

The Clerk to Governors (Eleanor Lewis) gave an overview of the Board Assurance Framework. The College must ensure compliance with Martyn's Law when it comes into force later this year, and the Assistant Principal had recently attended training relating to safeguarding and Martyn's Law.

The Committee agreed that it was reassuring to see the document, which will be kept under review. The Board Assurance Framework will be included in the Full Governing Body papers in July 2023. Clerk to add to the agenda. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 14.1. Risk-based consideration of priorities for commissioning audit assignments to confirm cycle of Assignment/IAS Planning and Strategy document

The Principal reported that he had recently met with the Director of Finance and Resources to look at the key areas for internal audit. It was agreed that the Committee needed to agree the scope of the audits. The Individual Learner Record (IRL) audit had historically taken six days, but there was scope to extend this to nine days.

A discussion took place about the key areas for audit. Key areas for consideration discussed were: cyber security, ONS reclassification, Key Financial Controls, student recruitment and marketing. It was noted that the college had had an external review of marketing in 2018 and 2019 which had been helpful in setting new strategies. Since the review the College had appointed an experienced marketing manager. It was agreed that the Committee would like to evaluate the college's marketing using a specialist marketing auditor.

It was agreed that the Committee will agree four key areas for audits, outlining the scope and quotes.

Dave Navarro left the meeting at 7pm.

The Clerk informed the Committee that the meeting was no longer quorate.

Item 14.2. Review of performance of Scrutton Bland

The feedback was positive regarding the performance of Scrutton Bland.

Item 15. Committee business:

Item 15.1. Timetable of meetings for 2023 – 2024 (draft in papers)

The circulated timetable of meeting was agreed. It was agreed that the Clerk will email the dates to the Committee. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 15.2 Review of effectiveness and membership (questionnaire will be online)

it was agreed that this will be circulated by the Clerk. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 16. Any other business

The Committee paid tribute to Eleanor Lewis, who will be retiring after 21 years loyal service as Clerk to the College. The Committee wished Mrs Lewis a happy retirement and thanked her for her support and dedication.

Item 17. Date of next meeting: to be agreed under item 15.1

- Tuesday 14th November 2023 at 5:30pm on Zoom.
- Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 5:30pm on Zoom
- Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 5:30pm on Zoom

Item 18. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed in prayer at 7:06pm.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Chair of the Committee