

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Minutes of the unreserved business meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 23 September 2020 via Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.00pm.

Present: Mrs M Hamilton, Mr W Hutchinson, Mr W McCluggage (Chair)

In Attendance: Mr D Conliffe (DfE), Mr M Higgins, Ms D Kerr (66.7), Mr S Lavery, Mr I McCartney (RSM NI), Mr B McGahan, Mr B O'Neill (NIAO), Prof T Scott, Ms J Small, Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

66.1 Apologies/Welcome

No apologies were noted.

The Chair welcomed Mr Ian McCartney from RSM NI, to the meeting.

66.2 Appointment of Committee Vice-Chair

Members agreed the appointment of Mrs Maeve Hamilton as Vice-Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee.

66.3 Declaration of Interests

None.

66.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 June 2020 were approved.

Proposed: Mrs Hamilton Seconded: Mr Hutchinson

66.5 Matters Arising

Members noted that an update on return to work had been provided at the Governing Body meeting on 16 September 2020. Mr Higgins informed Committee on ongoing engagement with Trade Unions, with the most recent meeting being on 22 September 2020.

Mr Higgins reported that the internal audit date of 30 September 2020 for completion of IT recommendations, was on track.

Members noted that risk and actions commentary had been updated in blue and was available to view on the risk register below.

The Chair reported that he had provided feedback for a review of risk descriptors, which would be taken forward at a workshop for senior managers at the beginning of October. Suggestions

would be brought to the Audit & Risk Committee in November. Members noted that risk management would also be part of the internal audit programme for 2020/21.

66.6 Chair's Communication

Consideration was given to the draft update to the Committee Terms of Reference. A number of suggested changes were noted and it was agreed that the annual meeting between the Audit & Risk Committee, Internal Audit and External Audit (without the executive/ senior managers present) would take place in advance of the next A&R meeting, as per the ToR.

ACTION:

- The ToR would be amended before presentation at the November meeting of the Governing Body.
- A formal meeting with Internal Audit and External Audit would take place prior to the November meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee.
- A further member for the Audit & Risk Committee to be agreed at the November meeting of the Governing Body.

66.7 Correspondence

The following correspondence was noted:

- The College Assurance Statement – return to operations, had been signed off by the Governing Body Chair and the Principal. Mr Higgins highlighted two areas in the statement where compliance had been caveated. The College would continue to submit assurance statements until full compliance had been achieved.
- NI Executive response to Covid 19: members noted the NIAO's review of implications.
- NIAO Raising Concerns Good Practice Guide: College guidance had been updated in line with this guide and would be shared with senior managers.

ACTION: The College policy would be revised to reflect the guidance in the Raising Concerns document and tabled at the Audit & Risk Committee in November.

66.8 Information Governance

Ms Kerr spoke to the Information Governance report for 1 May to 31 August 2020 and highlighted key pieces of work on policies and documentation, training and the work of the DPO/FOI sector working group. Members noted that the College website and the Information Governance training module now had a section on Raising Concerns.

5.30pm Mrs Kerr left the meeting.

66.9 Internal Audit

Mr McCartney spoke to the Draft 3-year Audit Strategy for 2020/21 and highlighted key reviews to be carried out through the year.

At the request of the Governing Body Chair, Mr McCartney agreed to include a number of additions to the Internal Audit strategy.

ACTIONS:

- Include consideration of changes over the past 6 months to curriculum delivery.
- Include a review of the impact of Covid-19 on delivery of output vis-à-vis moving to more online delivery, in particular noting broadband coverage across the College's extended catchment area.

66.10 Draft Annual Report and Financial Statements

Mr Laverty presented the draft Annual Report noting that it had been completed in accordance with the College PID and NIAO Audit Strategy, with no governance issues or policy changes to highlight. He drew members' attention to a number of key areas and reported a 'Satisfactory' assurance by Internal Audit.

Members noted that the draft accounts would be submitted to DfE and NIAO on 25 September, and would be reviewed by the Resources Committee on 12 October. The audited accounts would be brought back to the Audit & Risk Committee prior to forwarding to Governing Body. Members considered and questioned the financial statements. Mr Higgins highlighted that colleges' long-term sustainability was an issue across the sector and members noted that NIAO would be reviewing this over the coming year. Mr Conliffe confirmed that, as the College was an NDPB, the financial element was underwritten by the Department.

66.11 External Audit

Members noted information on the revised timeframe for the NIAO work programme. Mr O'Neill advised an anticipated date of 5 October for commencement of the audit, with the first draft available in early November.

66.12 Risk Register

Mr Higgins took members through the Risk Register to August 2020. He outlined factors involved in the red risks and key actions being taken forward to address same. Members also noted that a number of the amber risks would move to green in the early part of 2021.

Mr Higgins reported good engagement and support by CPD for the FE Sector wide maintenance work programme.

ACTION: Mr Higgins would amend the narrative on risk 8 to show the updated position.

66.13 Registers

Committee noted the Freedom of Information and Information Governance registers to 31 August 2020. No new whistleblowing concerns had been raised.

66.14 Any Other Business

None.

66.15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 4 November 2020.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 6.05pm.

Mr W McCluggage



Chair

Date 18 November 2020

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary