

**Pre-Meeting with Auditors**

Governing Body members of the Audit & Risk Committee met with representatives from NIAO, GT and DfE at 5.00pm, prior to the full Committee meeting.

**Minutes of the unreserved business meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 27 February 2020 in Newtownabbey campus commencing at 5.15pm.**

**Present:** Mrs I Allison, Mr W Hutchinson, Dr K McCambridge, Mr W McCluggage (Chair)

**In Attendance:** Mr D Conliffe (DfE), Dr H Dixon (Item 63.7), Mr M Higgins, Mr A Jardin (NIAO), Ms D Kerr (Item 63.8), Mr S Lavery, Mr C McCavana (GT), Prof T Scott, and Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

**63.1 Apologies/Welcome**

Mrs Eve.

Mr Jardin was welcomed to the meeting.

**63.2 Declaration of Interests**

None.

**63.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 19 September 2019 were approved.

Proposed: Ms Allison

Seconded: Dr McCambridge

**63.7 STS Presentation**

Dr Dixon spoke to her report on the LMS and highlighted key points including project development, risks and mitigation plans, and training and development. Members noted plans to review, and develop a benchmark for, benefits realisation.

Mr Higgins summarised the level of work undertaken to achieve key milestone dates and assurance provided to ensure controls were in place and being managed. He advised that due to progress on milestones it is proposed to reduce risk level from red to amber for the project.

**ACTION:**

- Dr Dixon will include projected risk movement dates in the report.
- STS would be moved from red to amber risk in the Corporate Risk Register.
- Dr Dixon will attend the GB meeting in March to update members on 'Canvas'.

The Chair commended Dr Dixon for her clear and precise presentation.

Dr Dixon left the meeting at 5.37pm.

### **63.8 Information Governance**

Ms Kerr presented the Information Governance report to 31 January 2020. Members noted that Mr Higgins had now taken on the role of Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) and that a draft records management policy would be presented to the next meeting of Committee for approval.

The Chair commended Ms Kerr for work on information governance carried out to date. He noted that benefit would be derived from having an awareness plan and highlighted a need for sensitivity in relation to personal data around Coronavirus to be addressed in continuity planning.

**ACTION:** Ms Kerr will:

- ensure that information in relation to sensitivity of data is added to communications on Coronavirus, which are currently being distributed.
- present draft record management policy to the June meeting.

Reference was made to an outstanding audit issue in relation to IT security and members noted that this was due to a resourcing issue and would be rolled out on a phased process.

Ms Kerr left the meeting at 5.47pm.

### **63.4 Matters Arising**

None.

### **63.5 Chair's Communication**

None.

### **63.9 DfE Partnership Agreements**

The Chair referred to information provided and advised that the risk assessment had been completed in accordance with methodology. He considered that the 8 working days allocated to complete the extensive document, over a mid-term break, was unacceptable. This was noted by Mr Conliffe.

Members noted that the risk assessment gave no opportunity to address ongoing issues.

Members noted that the Department would now agree and finalise college risk assessments.

**ACTION:** The finalised document would be circulated to Committee when available.

### **63.10 External Audit Update**

Members reviewed the findings set out in the RTTCWG, including the letter of representation and appendices 1 and 2, and welcomed NIAO's acknowledgement of sectoral funding pressures.

Mr Jardin thanked the Head of Finance and his team for their assistance during audit and members noted the excellent working relationship.



Mr Jardin notified Committee that appointment of 2 new Directors to NIAO, had resulted in college directorship being reassigned to Mr Patrick Barr. Formal notification to follow.

### **63.11 Internal Audit Progress Report**

Mr McCavana reported a rating of satisfactory for the 3 reports presented: Strategic Planning and Performance Management, Examinations and Lecturers' Implementation Agreement. Members noted the findings. Mr McCavana thanked the finance team for their engagement during audits. He advised that reviews of IT security, budgetary control and financial management would be carried out over the Spring period, along with absence management.

Prof Scott highlighted awareness raising materials being used to promote the College's 3 strategic priorities along with progress on the development of the annual appraisal process.

**ACTION:** A sample of marketing materials would be brought to the GB meeting.

### **63.12 Internal Audit**

Committee were content with the 3 reports.

### **63.13 Progress against Outstanding Recommendations**

Mr Lavery summarised his report to 31 January 2020 and thanked the internal auditors for providing timely reporting. Chair recorded thanks to teams for making significant progress from the last meeting and fully implementing recommendations.

Members noted difficulties in recruiting a procurement manager.

#### **ACTION:**

- Mr Lavery would amend the RTTCWG 18/19 target date, mark status as implemented and detail actions taken to close it off.
- Mr Lavery would review the status of the recommendation on 'Training & Awareness – Privacy' for the next meeting of Committee.

### **63.14 Risk Register**

Mr Higgins drew members' attention to changes made to the risk register following review on 31 January 2020, in particular in relation to increasing the risk rating for risk 1 and risk 2. Committee also agreed that risk 7 should move from red to amber status.

Prof Scott outlined the process for data gathering based on enrolment figures and Mr Conliffe advised that this process would be reviewed for the coming academic year, to look at collecting data on both individuals and enrolments.

Mr Higgins advised that the College's curriculum provision planned for next year would be critically assessed.

Prof Scott advised that Principals had met with the Director of FE earlier and were updated on the situation in relation to Coronavirus and members noted continuity plans in place based on Departmental advice. Advice to students in the event of self-isolation would be displayed on 'Canvas'.

**ACTION:** The Risk Register would be presented to the GB meeting in March.

### 63.15 Registers

Updates to the FOI, Gifts & Hospitality, Information Governance and Whistleblowing registers were highlighted. There were no DAC up to 31 January 2020.

Mr Higgins advised that recommended changes would be made to the conflict of interest policy within the next few weeks.

**ACTION:** Mr Higgins will circulate the updated whistleblowing register to Committee and advise the Department on outcome within DfE templates.

### 63.16 Any Other Business

Prof Scott updated Committee on positive engagement with the Department at the annual Accountability meeting on 16 January 2020. Members noted that NRC was the only college with no compliance issues in TfS and congratulations were extended to Mr Sean McAleese on this achievement.

**ACTION:** SLT will pass on Committee's congratulations to Mr McAleese.

Mr McCavana left the meeting at 6.47pm.

### 63.6 Correspondence

Members noted the letter from Grant Thornton advising that they would not be extending their contract beyond the end of the academic year and noted that Mr Lavery was overseeing with other colleges, procurement of a new internal audit service.

Mr Higgins outlined resource issues being considered in retendering for the service, based on levels of activity and the need for flexibility. Members agreed flexibility on the number of audit days required between 40 – 50.

Members noted that Grant Thornton would present their overall report and assurance in September, when it was hoped to have a new internal audit service in place.

### 63.17 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 4 June 2020 in Farm Lodge campus.

The meeting ended at 6.58pm.

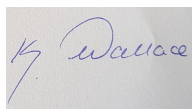
Mr W McCluggage

  
Chair

Date 20.04.20

20 April 2020

Mrs K Wallace



Secretary