

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF THE  
AUDIT COMMITTEE  
26 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**Present:**

Mr M Fabian (External Board Member)  
Mr S Harvey (Co-opted Member) for item 45/24  
Mr P Lachecki (External Board Member) (Chair for this meeting)  
Ms G Read (External Board Member)

**In Attendance:**

Mr K Agnew, IT Systems and Security Manager  
Mr A Bates, Chief Financial Officer  
Mr J Billingham, Director of IT and Estates, to item 46/24  
Mr M Burgess, Principal  
Ms J Cosson, Governance Professional/Clerk to the Board  
Ms L Tweedie, RSM

**Apologies:**

Mr A Dover (External Board Member, Chair of Audit Committee)  
Mr D Alma, Health and Safety Manager  
Mr S Lawrence, Hazlewoods

**Attendance: 80%**

**38/24 Opportunity for Private Business (including with Auditors)**

Members were given the opportunity to meet with the Auditors in the absence of the Executive. Members and Auditors confirmed that there were no matters of concern that they wished to raise in the absence of the Executive.

**39/24 Apologies**

Apologies were noted and received as above.

**40/24 Declarations of Interest**

None, other than those standing declarations currently recorded on the Register of Interests.

**41/24 Confidentiality of Items**

As marked, due to their commercially sensitive nature, for a period of two years.

**42/24 Minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2024**

The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed as a true record by the Chair.

#### **43/24 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix (C)**

Members reviewed the actions matrix and noted the status update of each item.

#### **44/24 Health and Safety Update (C)**

*GR and LT joined the meeting.*

JB presented the Health and Safety Update to August 2024.

There have been no RIDDOR incidents in last 12 months.

First aid calls for injuries this academic year are following expected trends with more minor injuries and medical incidents being reported due to new reporting processes. Members were pleased to see that DA had split out those not originating in the College, as requested.

Staff mandatory training completion rate is running at 93.2%, which is positive.

External and internal Health and Safety training courses are continuing for managers and staff in working at height, first aid, risk assessment, manual handling, and evacuation chairs.

The Llanthony Road junction roadworks are causing significant disruption to staff and students. A Member asked if there are any safety concerns. The College has written to the Highways Commissioning Team. The response to the College's concerns was included in the papers.

The list of mandatory checks was reviewed. A Member questioned the apparent six-month delay in the completion of the fire risk assessment at Cinderford. JB will check the position. It should be picked up in the external reviews carried out by Helios fire consultants.

Members thanked DA, in his absence, for the report. The Committee was satisfied that there is a strong Health and Safety culture at the College.

The Annual Health and Safety Report was included in the papers. This provided a summary of progress during the year. Members commented that the gap in first aiders needs to be monitored and noted that minibuss training is taking time to work through. They commended the developments in the medical protocol and in the control of fluids in Motor Vehicle and Engineering.

The Committee concluded that it was a reassuring, joined-up report with positive progress being made during the year.

The Health and Safety Policy had been reviewed and was included in the papers for consideration and recommendation to the Board for approval.

**RESOLVED: The Committee noted the report and the current assessment of the College's Health and Safety arrangements.**

**ACTION: JB to check the position with regard to the completion of the fire risk assessment at Cinderford.**

*JB left the meeting.*

#### **45/24 Cyber Security Update (C)**

This item was taken first on the agenda.

KA presented the Cyber Security Update. SH attended for this item, in his capacity as Digital Technology Link Governor.

KA reported that the Critical Incident Response Plan was tested last term by JB, in the absence of KA and MB, to test the loss of key personnel. SH added that it was useful to see how staff performed in this scenario. The exercise confirmed that the College's processes are sound in responding to a procedural attack at user level. Some issues were identified for improvement in terms of communication. The Director of People and Culture is actioning these. The next test will focus on a technical attack. The College was urged to set a date for the next exercise. KA and SH will be reviewing the approach to and frequency of conducting tests and will book a general penetration test with JISC in the new year.

A Member asked if staff showed adequate knowledge of the procedures and if there was any cost involved. They were informed that staff demonstrated they were able to easily locate the procedures to follow. There were no costs involved other than staff time.

Members discussed recent cyber intrusions on national and local organisations such as the CrowdStrike incident and attacks on UWE and Tewkesbury Borough Council. These events highlight the importance of the College's business continuity plans and of strengthening the College's resilience.

The College has made good progress with enhanced cyber security measures to reduce the potential attack surface including MFA on all student accounts. KA is due to speak about the College's approach at the JISC Cyber Conference in November.

KA advised that Cyber Essentials reaccreditation is due in October. Members discussed the poor timing of this and the possible options.

SH highlighted the latest statistics for governor completion of Boxphish training and phishing simulations. The importance of completing the training was emphasised and



Gloucestershire College

SH requested that governors are reminded at the next Board meeting. KA offered to give the same cyber security presentation to governors that he gave to staff at the College Development Day. This was on digital footprint and what to look out for in terms of both their college work and their personal lives. KA was asked to put together a short paper for governors setting out the areas where they are most at risk.

A Member commented on the staff vacancy left by a support analyst moving to a lecturer role and wondered if this is an issue. KA advised that he is interviewing for the role next week.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the Cyber Security Update.**

**ACTION: Governor cyber security statistics to be raised at the next Board meeting by WA/MB and governors who have not completed Boxphish training to be reminded to do it.**

**ACTION: KA to give cyber security presentation to governors. Date to be agreed.**

**ACTION: KA to put together a short paper for governors setting out the areas where they are most at risk.**

*SH and KA left the meeting.*

#### **46/24 Crisis Management and Business Recovery (C)**

MB referred Members to the previously circulated new framework and suite of procedures for crisis management and business recovery and explained how they fitted together.

DK had briefed Board Members on the Security Emergency Response Plan at the recent Safeguarding Workshop. Members questioned how the framework as a whole will be disseminated to the full Board.

The framework will be reviewed every couple of years unless there are any major changes in the meantime.

Members agreed that the new framework makes sense and hangs together well. They endorsed the high-level approach to minimising the risks without going into detail. It was considered that the plans were impressive and thorough with a helpful visual flow chart.

A Member wondered if the 'authorised' individuals should be identified in the document and was informed that staff will know who these people are.

It was suggested that the College seek external assurance over the framework from experts in the field.

**RESOLVED:** The Crisis Management and Business Recovery Framework and associated documents were approved. To be reviewed bi-annually (SERP annually).

**ACTION:** College to arrange for the Crisis Management and Business Recovery Framework to be externally reviewed and agree how it will be disseminated to the full Board.

#### **47/24 Internal Audit (C)**

LT presented the following internal audit reports:

- Annual Report 2023/24

The report provided an Amber/Green opinion, which LT advised was supported by the individual reports presented during the year. This is a positive level of assurance - 80% of RSM's colleges receive this level of assurance. The one high level recommendation was in relation to the funding audit and this is quite common. RSM will produce benchmarking information once all of their Annual Reports have been completed.

The Audit Committee were comfortable with the opinion. The report will be included in the Board papers for the next meeting for notification.

- Progress Report 2024/25

The internal audit plan is on track for the year so far with the first audit having commenced.

**RESOLVED:** Members noted the Internal Audit Reports.

#### **48/24 Risk Management Update, Annual Report and Board Assurance Framework (C)**

AB presented the Risk Management Update, Annual Report and Review of Board Assurance Framework (BAF).

High Needs, AEB and Financial Health scores have been revised down on the Risk Register. The Construction Centre risk has been removed as the project has been completed, with the exception of the monitoring of completion of the snagging list by EWG.

The Annual Report covered the key risks during the year and how they were managed.

Members found the updated BAF a helpful and concise source of information showing where the Board obtains its assurance, particularly for new governors. It was

noted that a RAG rating had been added to measure the strength of the assurances in place. The only area that was not rated green was People and Culture because the new Director of People and Culture is currently working through a workforce planning strategy. Members were invited to suggest any gaps in assurance. The BAF will be updated and presented alongside the Annual Report each year.

A Member spotted a potential error in the document on p154 where the comments appeared to be the same in both the first and second line of assurance.

**ACTION: JC to pass on to CM.**

There was a discussion regarding the Opportunities for the College as set out in the papers.

AB explained that 16-19 growth is benefitting the College at the moment but next year the College expects smaller growth after which it will plateau then there will be a slight decline until 2030 when growth returns. Market share will become increasingly important during the periods of low growth. There is some concern that the government will freeze or even cut the funding rate to pay for the growth. The College will not know what the rate will be for next year until January/February time, which is not long before the budget is due.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the Risk Management Update, Annual Report and Board Assurance Framework and agreed with the College's assessment of the risk position. The Risk Management Update will go to the full Board.**

#### **49/24 Review of Audit Recommendations Register**

Members reviewed the Audit Recommendations Register (ARR) and received an update from AB as to the status of each item. The GCZero lessons learned paper is overdue but will be produced this term. Members of the EWG will be invited to input.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the status of and were satisfied with the Audit Recommendations Register.**

#### **50/24 Management Update on Reportable Events**

There had been no such events since the last meeting.

**RESOLVED: The Update on Reportable Events was noted.**

#### **51/24 Approval of Policies**

- **Health and Safety Policy**

**RESOLVED: The above updated policy was considered and recommended to the Board for approval.**

#### **52/24 Key Items for GC Board**

The Key Items for Board were discussed, noting any risks to be added/highlighted on the Risk Register.

- Internal Audit Annual Report – to go in Board papers for notification.
- Health and Safety Policy – to go in Board papers for approval.

No further risks were identified. College context, strategy, and campus sustainability to be debated at November Strategy Board meeting.

#### **53/24 Any Other Business**

MB asked Members for their views on what the Executive Team should cover at the November Strategic Board Meeting.

#### **54/24 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

26 November 2024 at 5.00pm

Signed



Date

26 November 2024