

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF THE  
AUDIT COMMITTEE  
11 MARCH 2025  
via MS Teams**

**Present:**

Ms A Berry (External Board Member)  
Mr T Burrell (External Board Member)  
Mr A Dover (External Board Member, Chair of Audit Committee)  
Mr S Harvey (Co-opted Member) via MS Teams, up to and including item 9/25  
Mr P Lachecki (External Board Member)

**In Attendance:**

Mr K Agnew, IT Systems and Security Manager, up to and including item 8/25  
Mr D Alma, Health and Safety Manager, up to and including item 7/25  
Mr A Bates, Chief Financial Officer  
Mr J Billingham, Director of IT and Estates, up to and including item 9/25  
Mr M Burgess, Principal  
Ms J Cosson, Head of Governance  
Ms K Gentles, RSM

**Apologies:**

Mr M Fabian (External Board Member)  
Ms S McKinlay (External Board Member)  
Ms G Read (External Board Member)  
Mr S Lawrence, Hazlewoods

**Attendance:** 62.5%

**1/25 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.

**2/25 Apologies**

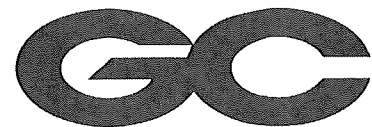
Apologies were noted and received as above.

**3/25 Declarations of Interest**

Members noted those standing declarations currently recorded on the Register of Interests. No new declarations of interest were noted.

**4/25 Confidentiality of Items**

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



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## **5/25 Minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2024**

Members reviewed the minutes. A Member queried the measurement of electricity savings. MB confirmed that 1200 tonnes is the measure of carbon savings rather than the amount of electricity.

**ACTION: Correction needed for the reported 1200 tonnes of electricity saved, which should be carbon savings. JC to amend the minutes accordingly.**

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting were approved, subject to the minor amendment to be made above, and would be signed by the Chair at the next opportunity.**

## **6/25 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix (C)**

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

## **7/25 Health and Safety Update (C)**

DA presented the Health and Safety Update to January 2025.

DA reported that there have been no new RIDDOR incidents.

DA noted an increase in first aid calls due to better reporting of minor injuries. He explained that many calls were for injuries that occurred outside the College. He clarified that these were not staff injuring themselves whilst working from home but non-College related incidents such as burns at home, falling off scooters on the way to College or tripping over on ice, and that these were being recorded and treated appropriately. JB added that these matters make quite a big demand on the H&S team even though they are nothing to do with the College. DA advised that there were 772 calls in January over half of which were for non-College related items.

In terms of first aid calls in College involving students these include self-harming, seizures and other medical issues such as sickness, vomiting and feeling faint. This is not uncommon towards exam time when there is more stress on students. Most recover quickly. Protocols are in place for seizures which are working well. Students have stickers on the back of their badge and there are documents in the reception areas so first aiders know when to phone an ambulance or when to phone parents. The College hopes to roll this out to staff if they do not mind sharing their medical history.

A Member enquired about the treatment by the College of injuries that have happened outside the College and wondered if DA was concerned that people are using the College as a different route for obtaining treatment rather than going to minor injuries or the GP. DA replied that he is not worried that this is a problem. The College does send people to the GP or to hospital. The College only treats them for first aid and is not qualified to offer anything beyond that. DA gave an example of an



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injury to an acrylic nail. The College administered first aid as best it could and sent the individual to the GP, who sent them on to A&E.

JB asked if the Member was concerned about the cost to the College, but the Member clarified that their main concern was the risk of the College treating someone incorrectly without staff being medically trained. DA assured the Member that people have usually had the injury treated before they attend, unless it has happened on the way to College, and it is therefore a case of re-dressing it.

DA reported on the ongoing issue with Legionella in Cinderford. The College is continuing to take measures to address it. The system was chlorinated in January, and three under-sink heaters full of limescale have been replaced. A retest is scheduled for next week to ensure the issue is resolved. DA advised that a trial is taking place of new sensors on each pipe going to each tap in Cinderford. This is one of the first in the country. The sensors monitor temperatures, flow, and time of flow, aiming to reduce the amount of flushing required and save water and energy. The trial is set for three months, with initial results showing some issues with sensors picking up activity at night.

The Chair asked what this information is showing. DA answered that the trial is looking at water and energy usage with a view to reducing the amount of flushing the College has to do and therefore reducing the amount of water and energy loss as well as staff time. This should show whether this system is beneficial to the College and what savings the College can make by using the kit.

DA reported that several six-monthly inspections have been carried out. This has highlighted some maintenance work required on lifts, for which a date is awaited.

The latest health and safety survey went out in the last week of December. Disappointingly, only 90 staff replied. DA will put together a summary of the comments and responses for the Committee.

DA reported on staff training including internal training with cleaning staff who have all had their health and safety training renewed in the last couple of months. More people are volunteering for the one-day emergency first aid at work course. A lot of technicians are doing this to be able to deal with minor cuts, leaving first aiders to deal with the more complex and pressing issues.

DA reported on the management and curriculum external audits carried out in January and February. The full report should be available by the end of March. The Chair asked if there were any preliminary indications and/or major findings and was informed by DA that there were a couple of suggestions on the management side, which the College will address through training, but nothing to be concerned about. Some of the curriculum area findings were very good. He highlighted that Construction in Cinderford, which was one of the lower scoring areas in previous audits, is up to 94% now. The reviews also found some best practice, which will be rolled out across the College.

TD commented that it appeared from the photographs in the papers that doors are still being propped open and asked how the College is tackling this. DA replied that there are plans to change some of the existing 'hold-opens'.

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

**ACTION: DA to compile a summary of the health and safety survey results, including actions to be taken.**

**JC to rearrange the missed H&S Link Governor meeting between TD and DA.**

*DA left the meeting.*

## **8/25 Cyber Security Update (C)**

KA presented the Cyber Security Update to January.

SH attended for this item, in his capacity as Digital Technology Link Governor.

KA provided an update on vacancies within the IT team member.

KA reported on the cyber response exercise conducted before Christmas with the IT team, highlighting areas for improvement. The exercise simulated a scenario where both KA and JB were unavailable, and the team had to respond without them.

KA reported on the Boxphish statistics, including governor completion and click rates. Members were pleased to learn that there had been no primary or second stage clicks. JC reported that most governors have done some of the training having been reminded, but not everybody has done everything that has been sent so far.

KA presented the results of a JISC survey that the College took part in late last year which compared the College against 124 other JISC members across the UK. Members were delighted to see that the College scored well overall compared to its peers with a lot of 100% compared to 50% for its peers. Where the College has not scored 100%, it will investigate why and how it could do better.

KA announced that the College achieved the Cyber Essentials accreditation before Christmas and the Cyber Essentials Plus certification a few weeks ago. This certification indicates that the College follows best practice in cybersecurity, although it does not make the College bulletproof against cyber incidents.

A Member congratulated KA and the IT team on this achievement, commenting that it is a huge amount of work and commitment. KA acknowledged the work that has gone into this across the College including enforced MFA on all student accounts,

**RESOLVED: Members noted the Cyber Security Update and the ongoing efforts to improve the College's cyber security posture.**

*KA left the meeting.*

#### **9/25 Cheltenham Construction Centre Post Project Review (C)**

Members had been provided with a paper evaluating the Cheltenham Construction Centre Project.

Members agreed that the project had been successful despite the tight timescale and congratulated the College on having delivered it on time and to cost. The Chair noted that it showed the benefit of having a shovel-ready project for when capital money becomes available.

Members who had sat on the EWG thought it was a really good summary in a very concise format. They encouraged the Executive Team to ensure that it is not relegated to a drawer but is easily accessible and referred to for future projects. They noted that a key element in driving the project was the management by JB and Jeremy Williamson. This made a huge difference, particularly in view of the timescale.

**RESOLVED: The Cheltenham Construction Centre Post Project Review was noted.**

*JB and SH left the meeting.*

#### **10/25 Internal Audit Reports: (C)**

KG presented the internal audit reports as follows:

##### **Final Reports**

- **Human Resources Controls**

KG reported that the HR audit had focused on safer recruitment in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance, and selected payroll controls. The audit resulted in reasonable assurance with two low priority actions and one medium priority action. The medium action involved revisiting the recruitment approach and obtaining legal advice if necessary. That arose because RSM had not seen elements of the approach elsewhere, not because they were necessarily wrong.

The audit found no issues with the payroll controls, which was a positive outcome. The low priority actions included ensuring the job description template was always used and adding a tick box to interview documentation to confirm no concerns were identified during the interview process.

- **Key Financial Controls**

KG apologised for the late paper.

The key financial controls audit focused on creditors and payments, resulting in reasonable assurance. Two medium priority actions were identified, related to compliance with financial regulations and the lack of a central record of tender waivers. Three low priority actions involved updating the procurement policy, adding version control to financial regulations, and reminding staff to raise purchase orders before placing orders. KG stated that the need to remind staff to raise purchase orders before orders are placed is a common finding in such audits.

Having looked at the accounts for the year, a Member queried how the College manages the areas that are at variance since there are clearly some that are higher variance than others and look like they might have been at high variance in previous years as well e.g., partnership payments.

AB replied that he will cover the management accounts at the Board meeting in March. Partnership payments go up and down with income. There have been some new income streams this year which relate to partnerships. He has no concerns about hitting the overall budget this year.

### **Progress Report**

KG informed Members that internal audits are on track for the year so far. The last two audits are due to be undertaken in April and they will come to the next meeting. There are a number of audits underway.

Members were pleased to hear that the work should be completed and reported within the year.

Sector updates were included in the papers, including the **FE Benchmarking Report**, as well as RSM's board assurance tool kit, which is intended to be a tool to help clients develop their own framework or enhance what they have already got in place.

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

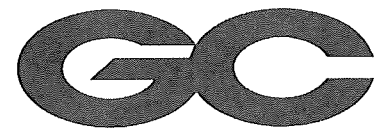
*PL left the meeting.*

### **11/25 Risk Management Update (C)**

AB presented the Risk Management Report and Review of the Strategic Risk Register, highlighting the changes to the Risk Register.

The key threats include economic health and changes to the curriculum landscape.

AB stressed the ongoing uncertainties in government funding, including the lack of information on funding for the National Insurance increase. This uncertainty affects the College's financial planning.



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AB mentioned the new Ofsted framework and the ongoing consultation process. He noted that there is a lot of contention nationally around the new framework, and the College is waiting for more information as the pilots progress. This had been covered in the recent C&Q Governors' Workshop.

AB discussed the potential impact of devolution on Adult funding, noting that around £1.4 million of contribution is at risk. He emphasised the importance of monitoring this risk closely.

The Chair asked if staffing is still a challenge. He noted that the industry benchmark is 24% staff turnover which is high. MB replied that the position has not changed dramatically. There are still a large number of vacancies, particularly in Construction and High Needs. He does not think the position will change soon. People coming in from industry do not tend to stay very long.

**RESOLVED: Members noted the Risk Management Update and Risk Register.**

#### **12/25 Review of Audit Recommendations Register (C)**

Members reviewed the Audit Recommendations Register (ARR) and received an update from AB as to the status of each item.

AB reported that a few audit recommendations have been completed since the last meeting. He appreciated the importance of continuing to clear outstanding recommendations to avoid a backlog.

Some recommendations have had their completion dates extended. These recommendations will be addressed promptly to ensure they are completed by the next meeting.

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

#### **13/25 Management Update on Reportable Events**

There had been no such events since the last meeting.

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

#### **14/25 Key Items for GC Board**

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

- Health and safety in a good place.
- Positive post-project review of the Cheltenham Construction Centre with a couple of learning points but, overall, a successful, well-managed project.

- Cybersecurity remains a high-profile issue receiving attention both from the IT team and from SH as Digital Technology Link Governor.
- No new risks or concerns.

**15/25 Any Other Business**

None.

**16/25 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

11 June 2025 at 5.00pm.

**MEMBERS ONLY ITEM (C)**

**17/25 Review of Internal Audit**

Confidential Members Only minute.

Signed



Date

11 June 2025