

**Minutes of the Audit Committee video-conference AC19.2 held on Wednesday 6 May 2020
Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge**

Present: Maria Ferguson (Chair, from item 2 onwards), Charlie Brown, Tony Humphrey, Alison Miles, and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas

In attendance: Yolanda Botham (Principal), and Charlotte Hemmins (Finance Director)

Clerk: Anne-Marie Diaper

Ref

Actions:

AC19.2.1 Apologies for absence

None. It had been necessary to cancel the Audit committee meeting scheduled for 25 March due to College lockdown, agenda items as appropriate had been deferred. Charlie Brown formally handed over the role of AC Chair to Maria Ferguson as approved at an earlier Board meeting. The committee wished the Clerk to record a formal note of appreciation/thanks to the outgoing AC Chair and the incoming Chair.

AC19.2.2 Declarations of Interest

None

AC19.2.3 Minutes of the meeting AC19.1 held on Wednesday 6 November 2019

With no suggested amendments, the minutes of the AC19.1 meeting held on 6 November 2019, were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

AC19.2.4 Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

Whistleblowing (Public Interest Disclosure) policy. The Clerk had drafted new policy for the committee based on a version already in use at another sixth form College, for the committee to consider recommending for Board approval.

A Governor had offered some administrative amendments by email, which did not materially change the policy. Two more Governors present at the meeting also raised similar points.

It was agreed to make further amendments to sections 6.1 about electronic and postal communication. Paragraph 6.5 was discussed.

The Clerk would make the amendments discussed and agreed and the committee would recommend Board approval of the amended policy.

19.1.8 Risk Assurance. Following a training session held on 11 March, led by RSM, Governors felt it might be advantageous for the Corporation to set up a small group to establish specific consistent instructions for committees on their role in risk assurance to also now take account of the strategic Covid-19 position. The meeting discussed the Chairs' Working Group (CWG), with wider membership as appropriate, but suggested the Board discuss in the first instance.

Ref

Actions:

Extending the discussion further, a Governor who had attended an AoC webinar suggested a small working group could provide a vehicle for agile strategic thinking, and risk mitigation, to enable Corporation decisions in between Board meetings. **It was agreed that the committee would make a proposal to the Board on 19 May.**

Board

AC19.2.5 Coronavirus updates

The Finance Director presented papers that set out College steps to manage risk at the present time.

The meeting paused for 5 minutes at 3.24pm so that one Governor who had lost sound logged out of the video conference and then re-joined. Later in the meeting there was a temporary loss of sound for/with one committee member.

The Finance Director reminded the meeting that College was now working and teaching remotely. A report set out the steps College had taken prior to lockdown, the current position and the possible next steps. College had developed a risk register separate, focussed on remote working, which was being reviewed weekly by the whole leadership team. She explained that it was difficult to plan for College reopening due to awaited guidance from government. The committee had been provided with a document that set out early thinking around a number of planned scenarios. Governors were prompted to come forward with questions.

The Principal advised that many briefings, some daily, were being received from DfE, the LA, AoC, SFCA and others, which set out a number of different perspectives. She drew the meeting's attention to a summary document College had received from the Local Authority entitled "80 questions around re-opening" which included specific questions relevant to *schools*. She explained College was juggling a range of challenges, remote working, cancelled summer exams, calculated grades, planning for possible return to College, and planning for new student intake. Risk mitigation and planning in common with local partners was in process.

A Governor asked if there was likely to be an Autumn exam series. The Principal relayed government advice that there would be a resit opportunity in September, but the exam board position appeared to offer no guarantees for all qualifications. College had presently no clarity for which courses or to how many students this would apply.

Another Governor asked about the appeals process in place for calculated grades. The Principal advised the position and the mechanisms in place for calculating grades and ranking. Exam boards were in the process of producing guidance.

A Governor voiced much confidence in the College team, and commented that he was much reassured that the reports covered everything expected.

Ref**Actions:**

The meeting went onto discussing emergency purchases made during lock down, how overall staff and students not being on site had affected budget, and how College had carefully managed finances. The FD and the Principal commented that the College was likely to incur additional costs on re-opening, including cleaning, measures for social distancing, hand washing/sanitiser, and use of outdoor space. There were a number of immediate known risks but many unknown factors. Reference was made to the Finance & Resources discussion on the development of the open space and the plans for the College reception which would require architect involvement and further discussion.

The Principal went onto mention a planned virtual open evening, and how this was being communicated externally.

A Governor felt that the next phase was likely to be more uncertain, with possible unknown new property and travel limitations/regulations, and he wondered how likely it would be that College staff might reach the limits of their workload. He asked what was being done to plan for loss of key people. The Principal was grateful for this, as a correct assumption for staff juggling big workloads, for families with shift working patterns and small children, all of whom were doing a fantastic job focussing on priorities. Staff briefings and meetings enabled the College to test how staff were feeling, and with some annual leave being carried forward, careful steps were being taken to support employees.

A Governor asked for a brief update on a project that was still in the planning stage. The Principal advised that the project was held in abeyance during lockdown. She felt the regulations and insurance limitations were unknown at this stage.

Another Governor asked about liability and insurance. The FD advised that Colleges were required to take out own independent cover to include indemnity. Insurance companies were currently in turmoil due to the virus impact on the travel sector. There was no specific advice yet around return and it was possible that premiums could rise. The College's insurers advised taking all reasonable steps, following advice and guidance, and being able to provide evidence. It was possible that restrictions could be placed on capacity of buildings on return, but that was likely to affect many sectors. The Principal articulated the many factors being taken into consideration for the many scenarios planned for College return. The coronavirus was exposing research that had been carried out on the possible inequitable resulting effect on disadvantaged communities.

AC19.2.6 Recent letters to the sector

The Clerk had provided a copy of a DfE/FE Commissioner letter dated 27 April 2020 to the sector. In terms of governance, she drew the committee to a specific paragraph, and noted the absence of a Post-16 Audit Code of Practice for the current year.

AC19.2.7 Any other business

Ref

Actions:

Audit, risk and compliance training on 11 March 2020. Governors wished to discuss the training that had taken place on 11 March led by RSM. Overall the committee felt the training was a good investment and use of time. Governors asked about RSM’s risk management software. Managers felt that the risk management process in place was effective at College but agreed to consider a remote demonstration to take place in the summer, and then consider the costs and benefits of such software.

June 2020 meeting. A Governor referred back to the meeting agenda where items greyed out had been deferred. A risk-based approach had been taken to ensuring statutory business remained on the Corporation’s agenda during College lockdown. In line with this, the committee asked for a strategic overview GDPR report to be brought to the June meeting to be presented by the DP Officer.

Agenda

AC19.2.8 Date of next meeting

The next meeting AC19.3 was scheduled for Wednesday 10 June 2020. The meeting closed at 5pm.

Signed

Date