

**Minutes of the Audit Committee video-conference AC20.2 held on Wednesday 24 March 2021
Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge**

Present: Tony Humphrey (Chair), Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, Alison Miles, and Sebastian Rasinger

In attendance: Yolanda Botham (Principal), Charlotte Hemmins (Finance Director), Jason Dear (DPO for agenda item 5, and ITS Manager: item 6)

Clerk: Anne-Marie Diaper

Ref **Actions:**

AC20.2.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from the Parent Governor, Steve Fosher. The AC Chair welcomed new Independent Governor, Sebastian Rasinger, to the committee. He also wished to record the committee's thanks to Maria Ferguson whom he had succeeded as AC Chair.

AC20.2.2 Declarations of Interest

None

AC20.2.3 Minutes of AC20.1 Wednesday 11 November 2020

With no amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

AC20.2.4 Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

AC20.1.10. The Finance Director advised that the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) would come back to the committee for consideration in June 2021 updated with lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic/lockdown.

AC20.2.5 Annual GDPR/Data Protection report

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) presented his GDPR annual update paper. The academic year had been a busy one, and College was continuing to update privacy policies in relation to data processing activities. He advised that clarifying data retention policies, particularly on student data, had been a key matter this year, and more was likely to be done on this.

The AC Chair commented that DP was a very current area of regulation and he wished to understand how compliance with legislation was assured. The Principal reminded the meeting that the risk mitigation measures were listed in the risk register. They included legal webinars, peer support groups, subscriptions to solicitor governance service, recent independent legal advice sought, as well as weekly updates from SFCA and AoC. Staff GDPR training was also refreshed every two years.

The item concluded by a discussion on subject access requests, appeals relating to grades submitted and then published to the individual student, and the number of appeals received by College.

Ref**Actions:****AC20.2.6 Annual Freedom of Information report**

The IT Manager presented his annual report on Fol. He spoke about the type of requests and the trends seen. He touched on a very large EHCP Fol request from a solicitor that had been very onerous to handle.

The Committee acknowledged with appreciation the extensive and time-consuming work carried out by the DPO and IT Manager in relation to data protection and Fol requests.

The IT Manager left the meeting at 4.53pm

AC20.2.7 Audit assurance mapping

The Finance Director gave a more detailed verbal update and overview to her paper as the committee had one new member.

She explained how the Audit assurance map was aligned to the College's strategic plan and risk register and that the process covered internal management controls, governance and external assurances. The map was intended to help to identify gaps in assurance and this is used on an annual basis to develop an internal audit plan (now called the assurance plan). She read through the marked updates and then paused for questions.

In discussion on the map, the meeting touched on governance oversight and the contribution of the strategy/training days. External assurance on cyber security, and an external audit being explored with a 'cyber essentials' provider. A Governor suggested that something on external assurance be added to SP5, as work in progress. JISC provided all member Colleges a checklist setting out actions to take to ensure security. As an additional measure LRSFC had secured additional cyber insurance which enabled regular updates in order to improve systems. The College regularly carried out IT system updates against malware.

**Finance
Director**

The P16ACOP required a counter fraud strategy to be in place, and the Clerk and managers felt there were some good examples to use. Some matters would come back for further discussion in the summer term meeting.

AC20.2.8 Review risk register and risk action plan and termly update 2020-21

The FD gave an overview introduction to this item. The Covid operational risk assessment had been provided for info only and was noted with approval by the Committee. College was now considering post Easter arrangements such as student spaces when not in lessons to ensure safety. The risk assessment remained a live document and the committee commented that this represented a massive amount of work, acknowledging that recent mass testing and regularly changing requirements from government had added additional pressure. This had been a good test of business continuity.

A Governor asked how the LRSFRC experience compared with other institutions in instances of Covid. The Principal advised that anecdotally LRSFC had experienced lower figures to other Colleges with possibly

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fewer concerns about lost learning. Students had been provided with the same number of teaching hours in a blended form. 'Catch up' funds had been used to provide extra teaching support to level 2 learners.

The FD spoke to the risk action plan (RAP) which set out additional actions and new risks in relation to risks rated high, or very high. She went through the new risks set out.

The Chair commented that the RAP seemed thorough and the committee recognised the detail but the systems in place needed to be properly implemented to manage the risks. He was keen to reconsider risk 5.5 for which he felt the requirements in the P16ACOP heightened the level of sensitivity. He commented that 'low' probability of occurrence was probably correct but challenged that the actual impact was likely to be 'high', so probably would be a medium or higher risk overall.

**Finance
Director**

External assurance would be added to risk 6.2, and the DP policy and Fof policies discussed earlier would need to come to the committee for review in June 2021. Whether it would be helpful to have a designated DP Governor would also be discussed at College, following the recent retirement of the DP Governor.

**Finance
Director**

Some other risks shown in the RAP would be likely to receive an update at the risk management group meeting occurring in the next week.

**Finance
Director**

AC20.2.9 Update on appointment of Financial Statements Auditor and other audit arrangements

The FD had provided an update on the FSA tender since Mazars had come to the end of their 5 year contract with the College.

The key assessment criteria was price (50%), customer requirements (40%) and value added (10%). The Clerk would be involved in reviewing the tenders as independent scrutiny. Under the requirements of the P16ACOP it was the responsibility of the AC to advise the wider Corporation on the appointment of the FSA, as the award of the contract was subject to Corporation approval.

She reminded the AC that a separate process would need to occur for the key financial controls audit.

AC20.2.10 Recent letters to the sector

The Chair reported that the FEC benchmarks definition document presented nothing new and no surprises for the committee. This was for noting by the AC for 'risk', and for FRC for financial monitoring. The Principal and FD commented that it was relevant and had been discussed at leadership team due to many factors including lagged funding, and costs related to Covid etc.

This item went onto discuss pay costs as a benchmark, and the benefits of meetings with ESFA with FEC involvement.

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AC20.2.11 Governance improvement plan (GIP) 2020-21

The AC considered the updates to the GIP. The Chair asked the committee to consider item number C6, 2nd bullet point. He felt that there was a different way of the AC/Corporation seeking assurance around compliance with regulation and suggested that the AC should reconsider what purpose a weighty report aiming to set out a whole plethora of regulations (including Ofsted, H&S etc), even if that were possible, would serve, and whether that was really necessary. The committee agreed that in addition to assurance from external financial controls, Governors should consider areas of high risk and look beyond the risk register and consider what additional assurances might be sought. **The committee would propose that the C6 second bullet point be removed from the GIP.**

Board

AC20.2.12 Any other business

None

AC20.2.13 Date of next meeting

AC20.3 Wednesday 16 June 2021

The meeting closed at 6.58pm