



## BRIGHTON HOVE AND SUSSEX SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

### MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON

**THURSDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024 AT 6.00 P.M. ONLINE VIA M. TEAMS**

Present: Sarah Bovill, Jo Davis (Chair), Rob Milton, Neil Perry

In Attendance: William Baldwin, Jutta Knapp, Mark Monahan (Assistant Principal – Digital and Communications), Louise Pennington

Chris Rising (MacIntyre Hudson – Internal Auditors) joined the meeting via M.Teams

The meeting was quorate.

***NOTE: FOR EASE OF REFERENCE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM GOVERNORS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN BOLD ITALICS***

### **SECTION 1: ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS**

#### **1.1 Apologies and Welcomes**

Welcomes: Chris Rising (MacIntyre Hudson Internal Auditor) and Mark Monahan – noting that they would both leave the meeting after item 2.1, which would be taken before Item 1.5.

Apologies: Daniel Osorio, Paul Lovegrove

The Meeting was quorate.

At this point the Chair recorded the Governing Body and Audit Committee's thanks to Sarah Bovill for her long service, valuable input and support over the last 15 years as a co-opted Audit Committee member, noting that subject to her successor being appointed at the next Corporation Meeting, Sarah would be retiring.

It was resolved to take items 2.1 at the start of the meeting, after which Chris Rising, who was present via Teams to present both items, would then leave the meeting.

#### **1.2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and signed as a correct record of the meeting. **ACTION: Chair/LEP**

#### **1.3 Matters Arising**

##### **a) Actions' Schedule**

The contents of the actions' schedule were noted by the Committee, taking into account those items which had been completed and those which were being carried forward or due to be completed later in the year.

The Committee was reminded about the Deputy Committee Chair vacancy, noting that this was due to be considered at the Search and Governance Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

#### **1.4 Declarations of Interest – None**

It was resolved to take item 2.1 before item 1.5 and that Chris Rising and Mark Monahan would leave the meeting at the end of item 2.1.

## 1.5 Principal's Update

William Baldwin provided the following update, noting that both Quality & Curriculum Committee and Resources Committee had also received similar updates:

It was resolved to transfer this item to confidential minutes owing to the sensitive nature of the business – refer confidential minutes.

Other aspects of the termly Principal's update will be included in the paper going to Corporation and includes various Student successes.

## SECTION 2: AUDIT AND INTERNAL ASSURANCE ITEMS

### 2.1 Internal Audit Reports

#### a) Cyber Security Follow Up Audit

Jutta Knapp introduced the item reminding the Committee that the paper was in respect of a follow up internal audit to the Cyber Security Report completed approximately 18 months ago, and that the internal auditors had reviewed the recommendations made in the original report, together with actions taken by the College.

Chris Rising reported on the internal audit work carried out during the follow up visit, noting the many recommendations made in the original report and the good progress which had been made by the College in progressing the various actions to date, particularly in light of cyber security being seen as one of the highest areas of risk in the sector. The following additional points were noted:

- Limited assurance was given in the original cyber security internal audit report.
- Referring to the good progress made with the various recommendations, over 50% had now been completed and signed off, including the focus by the College upon completing the higher level recommendations, with only 2 not yet completed.
- 1 medium priority action as a new recommendation regarding the issues of patching and anti-virus to be investigated and completed this month, together with ensuring that the administrative policy settings are applied.
- Other new recommendations in this follow up audit are advisory which if actioned will enhance the overall control framework in place, rather than addressing any areas of significant weakness.
- The follow up report also highlights the need to progress with implementing the outstanding actions from the original cyber security report, after which the College will need to continue to be vigilant on the controls.
- A note in the controls makes reference to the College's action to gaining Cyber Essentials accreditation, which will provide a sound baseline check, but will not necessarily prevent certain weaknesses materialising. Hence the importance of having an appropriate framework in place, together with regular monitoring of controls to ensure these were effective in practice.

At this point reference was made to Mark Monahan's paper included within this agenda item which he presented and the following points were brought to the Committee's attention:

- Good progress with the various priority actions was noted, and the extensive action plan which comprised 50 actions post the original cyber security internal audit, together with the improvements, resulting in a move to medium or low risk ratings.
- In progressing the various actions, the College has also investigated other cyber security, aspects outside the scope of the audit and as mentioned earlier, progressing the Cyber Essential certification.
- JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) provides cyber and digital health checks and the College is investigating various options to provide greater assurance for the College and to reduce and manage cyber risk.
- The College is working on more active monitoring and intelligence monitoring prompting, together with other advice and guidance from JISC relating to emerging threats and other current issues in the sector. Repeating guidance and regular reminders to Staff (and Students) will also be taken forward.
- Mark Monahan has been attending various online conferences and external events, some hosted by JISC which have proved useful and informative. To date topics covered have included updates on email safety and security.
- A member of the College's IT Team has enrolled on an apprenticeship in cyber security.

The Committee discussed whether to seek another follow up cyber security audit in say 12 – 18 months to review progress with the updated audit recommendations and priorities and to provide further assurance. It was agreed that it would be worth keeping this key area under review annually, in addition to the regular “audit recommendations” update report. Chris Rising also added that it was important that the College continued with its own second line of assurance work via JISC etc, rather than relying solely upon internal audit, to ensure prompt action is taken.

At this point Chris Rising and Mark Monahan were thanked for their reports which have provided assurance to the Committee and they then left the meeting.

At this point Rob Milton joined the Committee.

## **2.2 Update on Audit Recommendations**

The contents of the report were noted including the progress made to date, particularly highlighting progress with the cyber security recommendations as reported earlier under 2.1.

It was noted that the other recommendations were on track or due to be completed by the deadlines set.

## **2.3 Auditors’ Performance Indicators**

- a) Internal Auditors**
- b) External Auditors**

Jutta Knapp confirmed that the first year with Alliotts had proceeded very well, both off and on site, and their extensive knowledge within the sector was also acknowledged.

The Committee recommended both the internal and external performance indicators to Corporation for approval.

**ACTION: Jutta Knapp**

## **2.4 Risk Register**

The contents of the paper presented by William Baldwin, was noted by the Committee and the following points highlighted:

- New format and content were welcomed by the Committee and in particular the inherent and target risk, together with the links to the Strategic Plan.
- The new document has been shared with the other Governing Body Committees to date, both Resources and Quality & Curriculum.
- Risk Assurance Map reflects the discussion held at last term’s Audit Committee noting that the updates following this term’s Committee Meetings, will be reflected in next term’s version of the document.
- Regarding the key risks, the Committee agreed that the assurance was sufficient overall including the first key risk “S1” Adverse Government Funding decisions reduce financial health and create a difficult operating environment: which was referenced at the October 2023 Strategy event at which the SFCA Chief Executive, Bill Watkin, provided assurance to Governors too. Risk “S5” was also discussed, namely - Removal of BTEC qualifications impacts on suitability of study programmes for learners and quality of outcomes at BHASVIC: the Committee noted the current proposal to remove BTECs together with the uncertainty regarding the outcome of the General Election due this year, and it was noted that the risk had been assessed to have reduced slightly, owing to the caveats and information made available to prospective Students in the College’s prospectus etc.
- Regarding cyber risk and taking into account the discussions above arising from the Internal Audit follow up work, the Committee had gained assurance for the assessed risk rating in the Map.
- It was also noted that next week SLT would be meeting with the Head of Blatchington Mill School who will share experience of a recent fire and their learning experience arising from this in terms of minimising disruption to Staff and Students etc.

The Committee acknowledge the assurance provided by the various Governing Body Committees from the Autumn Term 2023 meetings and the Committee confirmed that it was satisfied with these assurances and also endorsed the key risks. Consequently, the Committee recommended the updated Risk documents to Corporation for approval.

William Baldwin agreed to revise the Risk Register taking into account the points made above, along with some changes agreed at the recent Quality and Curriculum Committee and that the final version would be presented to Corporation for approval. **ACTION: William Baldwin**

**SECTION 3: CONSENT AGENDA**

**Policies and Other Documents - None.**

**SECTION 4: OTHER MATTERS**

**4.1 FRAUD REPORT**

Jutta Knapp reported that at the SLT Meeting held earlier today to consider the cyber incident response plan, it was noted that there were no current incidents but that it had been agreed that Staff should be reminded regularly on actions to be taken should potential cyber attacks be made including advice on how to deal with phishing attacks etc. It was confirmed that Mark Monahan was taking this action forward with the aim of enhancing previous guidance to Staff and that reminders would be issued regularly to Staff every few months. In response to a question from the Committee it was noted that the IT Team had tested Staff responses under certain circumstances to determine whether there were any weaknesses or a need for further Staff guidance and training required.

It was also noted that there were no other known instances of fraud at College, since the last meeting report.

**4.2 ANY OTHER BUSINESS – None**

**a) Front Sheet Papers to Accompany Papers to Corporation for approval or for information**

It was resolved that the front sheets in respect of items to be included in the Corporation meeting papers, should include a record of the discussion, and recommendation held at the Committee Meeting, along with the meeting paper (revised if necessary). Regarding papers included within the consent agenda, it was confirmed that links would be included in the agenda to those papers, although the front sheet would be included in the meeting pack. **ACTION: Jutta Knapp/William Baldwin**

**4.3 Date of Next Meeting – Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 in the Principal’s Office, Room 22**

**SECTION 5: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

**5.1 Confidential Minutes from the Last Meeting – None.**

**5.2 Matters Arising – not applicable**

**5.3 Any Other Business (confidential) – None.**

The meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

Louise Pennington

Clerk to the Corporation

.....

**Chair of Audit Committee**

.....

**Dated**