

VARNDEAN COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 22ND MARCH 2021 AT 10.30 A.M.
Virtual Meeting via G. Meets

Present: Paul Herridge, Alan Walker, Brendan Ward
In Attendance: Elaine French (Vice-Principal), Donna-Marie Janson (Principal), Louise Pennington
Apologies: Peter Baker and Richard Seager
Welcomes: None
In the Chair: Alan Walker

1. Apologies for Absence and Welcomes

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

Item 6 Appointment of New Internal Auditor – noted that Peter Baker was employed by TIAA, one of the accountancy firms which had submitted a proposal for the College's Internal Audit specification.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th January 2021

The minutes were approved by the Committee and the Chair authorised to sign them, subject to one minor amendment – adding “meeting” after Audit Committee in the second paragraph of item 8. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

4. Matters Arising

a) Action Points- progress report

The actions completed were noted and the various actions which were being carried forward until the new Internal Auditors have been appointed, including GDPR, internal audit reports, internal assurance strategy and plan etc.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding a possible joint internal audit recruitment process with BHASVIC, Elaine French confirmed that she had discussed the proposal with her counterpart at BHASVIC, but that owing to various issues including workload, the pandemic and other factors, it had been decided to progress this separately. Also, regarding the discussion at the last Audit Committee meeting that consideration could be given to seeking a single piece of audit work in respect of the College's GDPR, that owing to time pressures, there had not been an opportunity to take this forward and that as the Internal Audit appointment process was now underway, it would be one of the first actions to be addressed once the new auditors were in post.

- Information security policy – deferred to June 2021 Audit Committee
- Risk Assessment document – this was circulated to Committee Members and Risk Group Members, last week via e mail.

b) Rolling Action Plan

The contents of the Plan were noted by the Committee, noting that all actions had been completed except for the IT Security Policy which would be revised and presented to the Audit Committee at its next meeting in June 2021.

c) Risk Management Action Plan

The contents of the Action Plan were noted by the Committee and that these were unchanged since having been reviewed and updated by the Risk Group which last met in October 2020 and considered at the January 2021 Audit Committee meeting.

Elaine French advised that any notable changes relating to the planned actions would be reported to the next Risk Group meeting in May 2021. She also confirmed that prior to that meeting, she would ensure that the relevant entries in the document, were consistent with the College's various risk assessments too.

MA13 (pandemic risk) – it was noted that the risk rating should remain unchanged, having taken into account the new risk assessment (referred to under Matters Arising).

F4 Uncertainty caused by Government Policy – it was agreed that the wording of this risk should also be reviewed by the Risk Group at its next meeting, to improve clarity e.g. revise wording to read “owing to changes in Government policy”. **ACTION: Donna-Marie Janson**

5. Risk Management

- a) **Draft Minutes from last meeting** – reported to last Audit Committee meeting in January 2021.
- b) **Assurance Map Update** – The Committee was reminded that at the last meeting, it was agreed that the sections regarding the sources of assurance offered by Management information and the self-assessment process elements, should be revised. Elaine French confirmed that the intention was that the changes in the document would be considered at the next Risk Management Meeting in May 2021.

The Committee discussed Risk F4 Uncertainty caused by Government Policy and Donna-Marie Janson and Elaine French explained that from the College's perspective, it was important to keep up to date with the continually change guidance issued by Government, combined with maintaining a close relationship with the regional ESFA contacts and that regarding the latter, the College had had several useful conversations with the regional ESFA in recent weeks regarding funding and financial matters.

c) Risk Register 2020-2021

Reference was made to the individual Risk points recorded above in Matters Arising (4c) and Risk Assurance Map.

HR4 - appointment of new Principal triggers Ofsted inspection – it was agreed that the wording should be revised to reflect the fact that a new Principal had been appointed.

ACTION: Donna-Marie Janson

P6 – Failure to properly manage the risks associated with construction works – the Committee queried whether this remained valid in light of the completion of the STEM centre. It was agreed that this should be retained for future construction project risks.

MA13 – Pandemic – the Committee queried whether the risk details should be revised to reflect the implementation of the lateral flow testing both on site and at home and it was agreed that this would be considered at the next Risk Group. **ACTION: Risk Group**

Risk Register and Risk Management Action Plan – following a suggestion by the Committee, it was agreed that the two documents should be merged to avoid duplication, but to ensure the explanatory notes regarding score, likelihood etc is retained in the final version. It was noted that it was essential that the risk identify, mitigation and process remained clear from the new document. The intention would be that the revised document would be brought to the Risk Group Meeting in May for consideration. **ACTION: Elaine French**

Subject to the changes recorded above, the current document was recommended to Corporation for approval. **ACTION: Elaine French**

6. Appointment of New Internal Auditor - REFER CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

It was resolved that this item should be recorded in a separate confidential minute owing to the sensitive nature of the discussions.

Performance Indicators for Internal Auditors – to be included on next Audit Committee agenda once the new Internal Auditors have been appointed.

Assurance Strategy and Plan 2020/2021 – ditto.

7. Policies and Other Documents

a) **Anti-Fraud and Irregularity Policy** – deferred to Summer Term 2021

b) **Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Privacy**

The Committee noted the contents of the paper, which detailed the information relating to FOI, Data Protection and Privacy to be included on the College's website, as recommended by SLT.

8. Fraud Report – nothing to report

9. Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 22nd June 2021 at 9.00 a.m.

10. Any Other Business

The Committee agreed a minor change to the Terms of Reference – deleting “in an ex-officio capacity” from the Membership section, bullet point 7 sentence reading “The Principal and Business Director will be invited to attend meetings in an ex officio capacity.” It was also

noted that the job title “business director” would be revised to read “Assistant Principal”.

ACTION: Louise Pennington

The Committee also discussed the likelihood of returning to on site meetings and it was noted that this would be reviewed based on Government guidelines, next term.

Chair.....Date.....

Louise Pennington 22/03/21