

## HARTLEPOOL COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

### Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 5.30pm in Conference Room 4

**Present:** Mrs M Roberts [Acting Chair]  
Mrs L Thornton  
Mr J Collett  
Mrs S Flender-Bradley

**Also Present:** Mr S Pringle [via TEAMS]  
Mrs L Chambers [via TEAMS]  
Mrs K Dales [Head of Governance]  
Mr D Hankey [Principal]  
Mr D Williams [via TEAMS - Assistant Principal]

1	<b>Meeting with external advisers only</b> Not required.
2	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies for absence received from J Bryson, H Hasnain [observer] and L Robson [RSM]. Internal audit provider S Pringle [W&B], external audit provider L Chambers [RSM] and Assistant Principal D Williams joined the meeting via TEAMS.  M Roberts chaired the meeting in J Bryson's absence and welcomed S Flender-Bradley to her first meeting.
3	<b>Declarations of interest relevant to the business of the meeting</b> There were no new declarations of interest.
4	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting 16 November 2022</b> LT identified an error in the minutes – item 15 should read 'nine' not 'nice'. Other than this small amendment, the minutes were approved as a true record and will be signed by the Chair in due course.
5	<b>Matters arising and action points</b> Previous actions are complete or an agenda item at this meeting. However, LT queried whether any Governors had accessed the FutureLearn online training. It was agreed that KD would resend the link and that it would be raised at a future Governor training session.
6	<b>To consider Wylie &amp; Bisset reports:</b> <b>SP gave an overview of each report:</b> <b>Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health</b> Overall the report gives strong assurance with 1 low level recommendation and 8 areas of good practice. All Governors agreed that it was a good audit. MR noted that the report states that the College did not participate in Mental Health Awareness week in 2022 and queried whether it would be doing so in the forthcoming event in 2023. DH stated that there will be activities during that week but agreed to pull together a programme to share at the next meeting. JC queried whether the College was engaged with ISO45003 which gives detailed guidelines for employers to use to manage Psychosocial risks in the workplace. DH agreed to look into this further. JC queried when the next staff survey would be circulated to staff and was informed that it has already been actioned.

	<p><b>Risk Management</b></p> <p>Overall report graded strong with 3 low grade recommendations and 7 areas of good practice. JC questioned what the report meant by risk appetite. DH responded that the College had previously rated itself as having a low risk appetite and that this was documented in the Risk Management policy. JC suggested that it was probably a good time to revisit this by risk type as the appetite might vary between the risks. DH agreed that going forward this would be added as an extra column to the Risk Register.</p> <p>LT and MR questioned the recommendation to establish an Operational Risk Register. DH stated that the College did not agree with this recommendation as operational risks were already explored in depth through the Business Planning and Review process. He did acknowledge that this was not always explicitly documented, but that it would be going forward.</p> <p>LT queried how risks raised by other Committee's were addressed and taken forward. DH responded that they would be added to the Risk Register either within an existing if possible or as a new one if needed.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Planning</b></p> <p>Overall a strong level of assurance was given to this report with no recommendations and 17 areas of good practice identified. There were no questions relating to this report and Governors asked that S Hope and his team be commended for the good report.</p>
7	<p><b>External Governance Review</b></p> <p>KD explained that the DfE Skills for Jobs White Paper in 2021 included a section strengthening governance within Colleges. This included a requirement for College's to undertake an external board review every 3 years, with internal self assessments in between. Wylie &amp; Bissett have been asked to submit a proposal which will go to the Board on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 for approval with the work to take place by the end of July 2023.</p>
8	<p><b>To monitor QAPP updates [standing item]</b></p> <p>DH explained that there are 9 policies that have not yet been reviewed and are past their review date. However he stated that work is ongoing to sort this and that none of the policies presented a material risk to the College.</p> <p>JC stated that in his view the timing of the lapses (some are 6 months overdue) is not really acceptable and is of concern. DH agreed and gave a commitment that all 9 will be completed before the next Audit Committee.</p> <p>LT queried whether the Lead stated is the person responsible or if the work delegated. DH confirmed that the work is delegated. JC suggested that given this, the word 'responsible' in the table should be changed to 'accountable'. DH agreed.</p>
9	<p><b>To receive and consider any risk reports from committees (standing item)</b></p> <p>Curriculum and Standards Committee had identified a risk that could impact on academic performance of the College. Two academic schools (Construction and Built Environment and Engineering) are experiencing serious difficulties in recruitment, despite having advertised several times. This is impacting on delivery to students and could jeopardise predicted achievement for some courses.</p>
10	<p><b>To consider and approve the Risk Register (standing item)</b></p> <p>DW presented the Risk Register and stated that there had been a few changes and updates since the last meeting and said that in future a table would be added to the front of the report stating the</p>

	<p>changes that had occurred to make it easier for Governors to follow.</p> <p>DW guided the committee through the changes and highlighted the addition of three new risks. One related to IT infrastructure with the risk being escalated due to long delays in the procurement of some key equipment. The other two both relate to the large capital development at Exeter Street and specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delays to the construction timeline that might delay handing Exeter Street back to the College</li> <li>• concerns about potential cost over runs on the main programme and the decant into temporary buildings.</li> </ul> <p>MR stated that the lease on the temporary accommodation does not end until December 2023 so if the construction does run over there is a small cushion to enable teaching to continue.</p> <p>DH stated that the College has received several other capital allocations which could potentially offset any overspend but that the team were currently working through the details of any conditions attached to them to make sure that the College is compliant. DW also stated that there is potential to access the Public Works Loan Board if all other avenues are exhausted but that this would be a last resort.</p> <p>JC queried whether any risks had been removed from the Risk Register. DW stated that he did not think so but would confirm whether this is the case and update the paper going to Board on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023</p> <p>Audit Committee noted and approved the risk register.</p>
11	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>No items to report.</p>
24	<p><b>To note the date and time of the next meeting:</b></p> <p>Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023 at 5.30pm</p>
25	<p><b>Meeting without external advisers</b></p> <p>Not required</p>

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**CHAIR**

**Action points from the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

No	Item	By Whom	By Date
5	The FutureLearn training link to be resent to Governors and also be added to a future Governor training session	KD	15 June 2023
7	DH to develop a programme of activities taking place during Mental Health Awareness week 2023	DH	May 2023
7	DH to consider ISO45003 and whether it can be applied to the College	DH	21 <sup>st</sup> June2023
9	All 9 outstanding QAPP reviews to be completed by the next Audit Committee	DH	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2023
10	A summary of changes to be added to future reports, including this report when submitted to the Board	DW	16 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
10	Risk appetite to be added to the Risk Register going forward	DW	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2023