

B O S T O N C O L L E G E

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 MARCH 2016

1. PRESENT

Mr D Hanson (Chair), Mrs H Wright, Mr A Atkins

Also in attendance: Miss S Hill (Clerk to the Audit Committee), Mrs A Mosek (Principal), Mrs J Hemmant (Vice Principal, Corporate Services), Mr Mark Ashton-Blanksby (ICCA), Mr P Collins (Director of Business Development), Mrs F Grady (Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality), Mr P MacPherson (Computer Manager)

Meeting attendance: 100%

Apologies for absence were received from: Mr R Lewis (RSM) and Mr Jonathan Creed (ICCA)

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 26 NOVEMBER 2015

The minutes were reviewed and signed as a true record.

3. ACTION LOG

There were no issues to record.

There was nothing to follow up on the Audit Recommendations Tracking sheet.

4. INTERNAL AUDIT

a) External Assurance of Sub-Contracting Controls

Mr Ashton-Blanksby said that at the last meeting the Committee replaced 'Safeguarding' with 'External Assurance of Sub-Contracting Controls' on the audit plan. He confirmed that this was an advisory report only to give assurance and provide a certificate that the College is compliant with SFA procedures. There were two points on the action plan on page 5 of the report which Mr Collins said had already been actioned. Mr Ashton-Blanksby said that this was one of the cleanest reports he had seen, from 25 Colleges they have audited; it is generally considered to be a high risk area.

b) Advisory Report – Models of Curriculum

Mr Ashton-Blanksby produced his advisory review of the curriculum management structure and models of delivery adopted during 2015/16. The advisory action was that the College should ensure a consistent approach throughout all curriculum areas.

Some detailed benchmarking was included comparing staffing levels with averages elsewhere in the sector. Mrs Wright asked if consideration had been given to the large number of Programme areas (18 compared to 12 in a similar size college) and Mrs Grady said that they had made a conscious effort to ensure that each teacher has one line manager to whom they are accountable, and that PAMs have full control over their areas. The report also showed discrepancies in the size of programme areas, but Mrs Grady said that the difference in teaching commitments as well as the complexity and challenges of some students within

certain areas helps to balance this. Mrs Mosek added that success rates etc have improved and the management team do not want to consider a restructure at the current time in case of a possible merger. Mrs Mosek said that it was helpful to have had an independent review.

Mr Ashton-Blanksby also commented with regard to the structure of the curriculum that the main point when moving forward, is that the College needs to know that students are in the correct band to get maximum funding for each learner. Further discussion took place regarding benchmarking and funding and how other colleges are able to obtain a larger percentage in the higher funding bands. Mr Ashton-Blanksby said that it was about adopting the spirit of the funding guidance.

c) Corporate Governance

The audit looked at the Board structure, skills set of the Board members, high risk areas of governance, what is expected for a Board, adequate reporting etc. This was a detailed review which was given a Substantial assurance and highlighted experienced Board members across a range of backgrounds, detailed reports and good clerking arrangements. Some housekeeping issues were identified eg attendance at meetings; the Chair is to take this up with Governors who struggle to attend. Other issues were regarding succession planning so that any gaps in knowledge/experience can be filled when Governors leave or retire and mandatory training of new Governors to make sure that Safeguarding and Prevent training is complete.

Mr Hanson asked whether this report should go to Governors and Mrs Mosek said that it should go to the full Corporation.

d) International Provision

The review looked at the systems and processes used in the recruitment of learners from overseas. A positive opinion was given; the file structure was found to be good, effective controls, good evidence, tracking and a clean report. The area was given a Substantial assurance with no recommendations. It was stated that this is a potentially high risk area with issuing visas etc.

Mr Hanson asked if there is a difference between the checks carried out for Tier 4 and European applicants. Mr Collins said there was and, for Tier 4, there was lots of guidance on the UKVI (UK Visa and Immigration) website and UKVI can and have done spot checks.

e) IT Infrastructure, Security and Disaster Recovery

The aim of the audit was to ensure the College's data security and management policies are appropriate to protect the College from loss of data. The overall conclusion was a reasonable assurance. Discussion took place regarding the areas requiring improvement and action. Mr MacPherson, ICT Manager explained to the Committee that the Firewall is in the process of being upgraded and almost in place. He said that when done, the rules re the Firewall will be documented and put in place. Further discussion took place about access control, patch management (an incident occurred during the time of the audit) and formalising the processes. On the topic of potential IT disaster it was thought that knowledge of what systems are in place needed to be understood and discussed at senior level and a meeting of SLT had already looked at this..

Mr Atkins asked about the size of the team. Mr Ashton-Blanksby said that there is no benchmarking of staff in this area, but felt that in ICCA's opinion, the team appears to be small. It was agreed that the Senior Leadership Team would need to talk through what is sensible

and possibly look at recruiting an Apprentice to shadow one of the team. Mr MacPherson is to annually go to an SLT meeting to review. Mr MacPherson said that sometimes staff within the College do expect too much and for jobs to be done instantly, which can be difficult due to the small number within the team. Further discussion took place.

Mrs Wright asked about the risk of cyber-attacks and the Committee was informed that there had recently been an attack on the college's service provider and the internet had been severely disrupted.

5. REVIEW OF THE KEY INFORMATION SET (KIS) 2015-16

Mrs Grady explained that the College had been selected for review of KIS. She said that the HE Funding Council had introduced a key information set which every institution delivering HE was expected to provide. The purpose is so that potential students can compare courses at different institutions. The College had made errors in its return but these had subsequently been put right and new controls introduced to avoid a similar situation happening.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Mrs Hemmant presented a paper on Risk Management and said that following recommendations from ICCA, the Risk Register had been fundamentally reviewed and rationalised. It had been reduced and now held 36 risks, which has made it more manageable, with additional detail on sources of assurance. Discussion took place and Mr Ashton-Blanksby said that it was a good, detailed system and the key is keeping it up to date and thinking about whether there are any new risks.

7. COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION

The policy on Committee Constitution had been revised with approval of the Board. Mrs Hemmant said that a new member was being sought for the Audit Committee with the possibility of using the newly elected staff member.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mrs Hemmant informed the Committee about a recent incident involving a member of staff and a payroll issue. Mrs Hemmant assured the Committee that actions had been taken to ensure oversights like this are unlikely to happen in the future.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 23 June 2016, 3 pm