

AQUINAS COLLEGE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Meeting: 5 June 2023
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mrs H Dove, Mr A Martin and Mr A Anwar.

Mr A Martin in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr M Benson and Mrs N Tucker	Murray Smith LLP
Mr S McCreedy	Wylie and Bissett
Mr D Pearson	Principal (Item 6)
Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body

1. OPENING PRAYER

The meeting began with a prayer led by Mr Martin.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Ms M Garratt.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

4. COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2023, copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Mrs Blackburn left the meeting at this point.

6. AUDIT REVIEW

The Chairperson asked the Auditors if there were any areas of concern in the college that they wished to raise with the Audit Committee. Murray Smith advised Members that last year's audit had run efficiently and that Mrs Blackburn had all the information ready for the audits, they have a good dialogue over the planning and timing of the audits and that she is proactive. Wylie and Bissett

echoed the comments of Murray Smith and added that everyone was very helpful.

Mr Pearson advised members that Mrs Blackburn was well respected within the sector and is involved in wider aspects of the college. She had taken on additional work as a result of the college moving back into the public sector and the new capital build.

The Committee and Mr Pearson acknowledged the professionalism and hard work of Mrs Blackburn and they recorded their appreciation of the work that Mrs Blackburn does across the college.

Mr Pearson thanked the Auditors for their positive comments.

Mrs Blackburn rejoined the meeting and Mr Pearson left the meeting at this point.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Wylie and Bissett outlined their approach to internal audit and the format of their reports. The grading would be based on recommendations contained in the report. In addition, they would highlight areas of good practice at the college along with benchmarking amongst their clients.

A discussion took place on the internal audit report that had been prepared by Wylie and Bissett on:

a) Learner Numbers	Strong Assurance There were no recommendations
--------------------	---

The object of the audit was to ensure i) the college is collecting and recording data in accordance with the ILR Specifications for 2022/2023, ii) Core data is collected and accurately entered on the college's student records system and iii) The risks identified from the ESFA funding assurance review for 2021/2022 are being addressed by the college.

There were no recommendations in the report and 17 areas of good practice were identified. The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been bench marked against.

b) Safeguarding	Strong Assurance There was one low recommendation
-----------------	--

The object of the audit was to ensure i) That the college keeps up to date with legal requirements and ensures that policies and procedures are revised regularly, ii) There are clear responsibilities and accountabilities for safeguarding arrangements at senior level, iii) The college has a single central record which is up to date and includes all relevant information, iv) The college self assessment processes ensure that the impact of safeguarding provision is measured effectively, v) The college has robust systems and processes for dealing with safeguarding issues reported, which include escalation process and vi) Staff have received appropriate training on the college safeguarding arrangements to enable them to be confident and well equipped to promote safeguarding in a sensible and proportionate way.

There was one low recommendation in the report and 25 areas of good practice were identified. The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been bench marked against.

Low Recommendation – It is recommended that the college roll out CPOMS access to all staff as soon as possible with restricted access as required. The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been bench marked against.

c) Follow Up Review

Strong Assurance
There was one medium recommendation

The object of the audit was to ensure i) that the college has appropriately implemented any outstanding internal audit recommendations made in previous years. Four out of the five recommendations had been implemented fully and one partially implemented.

Medium Recommendation – That the Cyber Security training scheduled for all staff is completed and an assessment is included at the end of the training module to evaluate the learning. It is also recommended that there is a training timetable adopted to ensure refresher training is completed for all staff.

8. ACTION ON INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Mrs Blackburn introduced a paper that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The paper summarised the action taken by the college on internal audit findings. All recommendations had been implemented or superseded.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT

Wylie and Bissett introduced a report, that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, which gave details of the use of audit resources, the outcome of work completed to date and incorporated cumulative data in support of internal audit performance. Progress against the Operational Plan was noted and that all the planned work had been carried out. There had been no changes to the agreed audit plan. A summary of the work undertaken in 2022/2023, the levels of assurance given and the number of recommendations made was included in the report. There were 3 recommendations of which 1 was classed as medium and 2 as low risk. Wylie and Bissett advised members that they had not seen full set of strong assurance from other audits that they had undertaken in the sector.

The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report be received.

10. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2023/2024

Wylie and Bissett introduced a report, that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, which gave details of the areas to be covered in 2023/2024. The areas were as follows:

Capital Funding	3 Days	Report to June 2024 Audit Committee
Learner Numbers	3 Days	Report to June 2024 Audit Committee
Health and Safety	3 Days	Report to February 2024 Audit Committee
Freedom of Information	3 Days	Report to February 2024 Audit Committee
Follow Up Review	2 Days	Report to June 2024 Audit Committee
Audit Management	<u>3 Days</u>	
Total	<u>17 Days</u>	

RESOLVED: That the Audit Plan for 2023/2024 be agreed.

11. POST 16 - AUDIT CODE OF PRACTICE

Mrs Blackburn introduced a paper that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The paper summarised the main changes to the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice for 2022/2023. Mrs Blackburn undertook to forward to members the full document. The Code is reviewed and updated annually to reflect the latest sector developments and best practice and now reflects the fact that the college has moved into the public sector and is responsible for Managing Public Money. Many of the changes are at a high level and do not affect the college.

Murray Smith advised Members that as a result of the college moving to the public sector they have provided the college with an update on changes to their approach due to revised auditing standard.

Mr Martin reminded members that academies are in the public sector.

12. DRAFT AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2023

Murray Smith LLP submitted the Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 31 July 2023. The Audit Strategy Memorandum sets out the audit plan in respect of the statutory audit for the College for the year ending 31 July 2023. The memorandum contained the following:

- a) the Scope of Engagement for the audit of Financial Statements, Reporting on Regularity and audit of Teachers Pension Agency Return (“TPA return”) for the year ending 31 July 2023
- b) Respective responsibilities
- c) Independence
- d) Audit Approach
- e) Significant Risks and Key Judgement areas
- f) Other communication requirements
- g) Audit time line.

The audit fees for the year ending 31 July 2023 will increase by 2% to £11,471 excluding VAT.

Murray Smith reported that some of the work on the ILR would be brought forward to the summer term 2022. Work on the Teacher’s Pension Scheme had been completed and returned by 31 May 2023.

13. FEEDBACK ON ACTIONS FROM RISK REGISTER FOR JUNE 2022

Mrs Blackburn introduced a paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting that provided Members with a brief overview on risk areas which are a focus for the current half term. The areas were as follows:

- i) Covid Pandemic
- ii) ESFA funding
- iii) Drop in ESFA 19+ funding and rise in fee charges
- iv) High level ALS
- v) BTEC Reform
- vi) The college overspends its revenue
- vii) Recruitment of students
- viii) Failure to maintain the reputation of the college
- ix) Inability to recruit and retain key staff
- x) Student Issues – attendance, progression and drop out is not acceptable and fails to achieve targets set.
- xi) The college fails to maintain a high standing in national performance tables

ix) Inspection announced at short notice for Denominational Inspection.

x) Recent Ofsted Inspection

Mrs Blackburn added that Covid Pandemic will be removed from the next Risk Register.

+

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

14. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Members discussed whether or not the Internal and External Auditors had met the targets on the Performance Indicators form, which had been circulated before the meeting. It was agreed that both the Internal and External Auditors had met the targets.

15. FRAUD LOG BOOK/WHISTLEBLOWING

Mrs Blackburn advised Members that there were no incidents of fraud, corruption or whistleblowing to report.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Any Other Business

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 6 November 2023 at 4.30pm, subject to the Calendar of Meetings being agreed by the Governing Body at its meeting on 27 June 2023.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____