

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting held at 6pm on 10th June 2025 via Teams

Members Present: Sarah Mason (Chair), John Boyle (Vice Chair), Victoria Topham

Apologies: Tim Marshall

In Attendance: Jenny Craig (Principal & CEO), John McGrath (Chief Operating Officer (COO)), Oliver Roth (Executive Director MIS & Digital Transformation (EDMISDT), Anna Smith (Director of Governance), Chris Mantel (Alliotts, External Auditors)

Minute No.	Agenda Item
A&R 01/25	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted. There were no declarations of interest relevant to the business of the meeting. The meeting was quorate.</p>
A&R 02/25	<p>Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 26th November 2024 and Matters Arising</p> <p>The minutes were Approved as an accurate record of discussion. All actions had either been completed or were covered in the meeting.</p>
A&R 03/25	<p>Committee Terms of Reference 2025-26</p> <p>The Committee scrutinised its draft Terms of Reference for 2025-26 and the agreed changes were noted by the DG to amend (Action: DG). Subject to these amendments, the Committee agreed to Recommend the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2025-26 to the Corporation for approval.</p>
A&R 04/25	<p>External Audit Plan 2025-26</p> <p>Chris Mantel (CM) provided an overview of the audit approach, confirming it remains consistent with previous years and will include an opinion on regularity and an opinion on the truth and fairness of the financial statements.</p> <p>Key areas of focus include the continued development and valuation of assets for the new build at High Wycombe and Aylesbury site works. Some settlements made during the year will be reviewed for regularity, although CM confirmed that the College advised these did not breach the DfE pre-approval threshold. CM noted the college has been transparent, and these matters will be clearly documented in the audit plan to support future inspections.</p> <p>CM drew the Committee's attention to the recent report on Weston College, highlighting governance lessons for members to consider and recommending governors read the report which emphasises the importance of active oversight.</p>
A&R 05/25	<p>Query was raised and CM confirmed that issues at Weston College had not influenced any changes to Alliott's audit plan as they related primarily to undisclosed senior post holder remuneration. Discussion took place regarding lessons learned from Weston College and conversation emphasised the importance of transparency and scrutiny regarding senior post holder pay. Reassurance was provided that the reporting link between the Remuneration</p>

	Committee and the Corporation is being strengthened with a more formal approach to provide greater assurance and oversight of senior post holder performance and pay.
A&R 06/25	Query was raised regarding the Committee having the option to meet with the auditors without the executive present and clarification was sought of CM on best practices. CM advised most colleges implement this practice, typically a very short session at the November/December meeting and, in line with the principles of openness, if any issues were to be raised these would be raised in advance with the Chair and executive beforehand. Following discussion, the Committee agreed a brief meeting with the auditors without the executive present would be scheduled at the start of the Autumn term meeting (Action: DG).
A&R 07/25	The Committee discussed audit coverage of systems and controls, prompted by concerns raised in the Weston College case. CM clarified that the audit focuses on key financial controls linked to the financial statements, using transaction-based sampling and walkthroughs, but does not cover full end-to-end process reviews. Victoria Topham highlighted the need to understand audit limitations and identify any additional oversight required and John Boyle emphasised governors' responsibilities in ensuring effective controls. The COO confirmed that internal processes are transparent, with auditors well-equipped to challenge and escalate issues as needed. The DG confirmed that an assurance report based on the Weston College recommendations will be reviewed by the Search & Governance Committee at its next meeting.
A&R 08/25	The Chair sought assurance regarding the repeat risk of findings noted in Section 8 (Issues raised in previous audits) and the COO confirmed most findings are not expected to recur, with the exception of one relating to historical HR contract documentation, which remains challenging due to legacy issues. The Principal confirmed HR processes are in transition toward digitalisation, and this will be a priority for the incoming Director of People and Purpose.
A&R 09/25	Query was raised regarding the materiality threshold and clarification on reporting was provided. CM acknowledged the college's proactive approach in disclosing sensitive figures to ensure transparency and accuracy. Audit fees for the year were confirmed.
A&R 10/25	Following discussion, the Committee agreed to Approve the External Audit Plan 2025-26. The Chair thanked CM for his contribution to the meeting. <i>Chris Mantel left the meeting at 6.40pm.</i>
A&R 11/25	Internal Audit and Assurance Reports 2025-26 The Committee discussed strengthening the assurance framework, with plans to present reports on Health & Safety and Cyber Security at the meeting on 8/7/25 and potentially a payroll audit by the end of July. These are part of a rolling three-year cycle aiming for two to three assurance reports annually. Timings of subcontracting audits will be defined by the DfE. There was agreement on the need for flexibility to respond to sector developments and a suggestion to review key financial controls more frequently. The importance of linking assurance activities to the risk register was emphasized, along with the need to summarise checks and balances for clearer reporting. The committee agreed that showing at least three reviews in the annual report would better reflect its oversight role. Query was raised regarding the procurement of internal audit/assurance providers and, following discussion, it was agreed a rolling programme of suggested audits and suggested providers/specialists would be provided for the next meeting (Action: COO).

A&R 12/25	<p>Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>In reviewing the risk register, the Principal informed the Committee of the Critical Incident Strategy being prepared and a Critical Incident Management Team being established to support business continuity.</p> <p>The committee reviewed the current format and content of the risk register. Suggestions were made regarding formatting, and it was proposed that a primary owner be assigned to each risk area to ensure clearer accountability.</p> <p>Members discussed the inclusion of additional risks, such as the broader implications of the new build, supplier selection, and the current HR leadership transition. These were considered important to reflect the full scope of organisational risk.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the static nature of the risk register, with little change in risk ratings over time. It was suggested that trends be tracked to assess the effectiveness of mitigation actions and to determine whether risks are being actively managed or simply maintained.</p> <p>The committee also discussed aligning the risk register with key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure coherence across management tools. This would help identify gaps and ensure that documents are used meaningfully in decision-making (Action: COO to review Strategic Risk Register taking into account above discussion points).</p> <p>Finally, it was agreed that further exploration of alternative risk register formats and best practices from other colleges would be beneficial (Action: DG to seek examples via network).</p>
A&R 13/25	<p>Date of Next Meeting 8th July 2025</p>

The Chair thanked all for attending. The meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Approved as an accurate record of discussions: 14th July 2025