

MOULTON COLLEGE

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 8th March 2021 via Teams

- Present:** Mr A Clarkson (in the Chair), Mr D Aarons, Mr B Hansford, Mrs H King and Ms L Knapp
- In attendance:** Miss A S Bruce, Mr M Dawson (KPMG), Mrs C Harris, Mrs G M Hulley, Mr J Lanes (BDO) and Mrs A Rowe (BDO),

SECTION A – ROUTINE AND GOVERNANCE ITEMS:

- 21/01 Apologies for absence (Agenda item 1)**
Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Pate.
- 21/02 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 2)**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 21/03 Minutes of the last meeting (Agenda item 3, Paper A)**
The minutes of the meeting held on the 7th December 2020 had been circulated previously. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.
- 21/04 Actions outstanding (Agenda item 4, Paper B)**
There were two outstanding actions. A reminder had been sent to any governor who had not completed their online module(s) (**Action 23** – Open). A copy of the Health and Safety action plan had been uploaded to Teams (**Action 30** – Closed.) The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) confirmed that the report and action plan had been subject to close scrutiny by the Health and Safety Committee. Mark Wakeford, link governor champion attended those meetings.

SECTION B – CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER'S (CFO) UPDATE:

- 21/05 Risk Management (Agenda item 5, Paper C)**
The report provided the latest situation in relation to the strategic and corporate risks. Included in the action plan was a detailed narrative explaining any further actions that needed to be taken and progress towards reducing any particular risk. The report confirmed that there was a robust system of risk management in place which was overseen by this Committee. This had also been supported by positive endorsements from various external agencies.

In one instance, where the direction of travel had worsened, the Committee was informed that this was linked directly to the current situation with Covid-19. The CFO outlined the actions being taken to mitigate the risk and confirmed the timeline involved in the review process.

Resolved: To receive the Risk Management report.

- 21/06 Internal audit tracker (Agenda item 6, Paper D)**
The report outlined the progress that management had been made in implementing agreed internal audit recommendations for the period ending

February 2021. The position was positive with a good majority implemented or partially implemented.

Of those that remained outstanding, the Committee sought clarification around any challenges associated with the current national lockdown in terms of affecting progress. There was an impact on staff resources in some instances resulting in the need to re-prioritise. Further assurances were sought around the progress updates that had been provided for some internal audits:

- ILT strategy – an action plan was being formulated and external support would be sourced to take this forward;
- Data security – further work was being completed to improve future response rates to the impact survey.

It was agreed that as part of the work due to be completed throughout April by the internal auditors, that this would also be an opportunity to review any recommendations that were still outstanding in order to report to the Committee of progress that had been made.

Resolved: To receive the report on the Internal Audit Tracker.

SECTION C – INTERNAL AUDITOR UPDATE:

21/07

Internal audit reports 2020-21 (Agenda item 7):

a. Quality assurance (Paper E)

The report carried a level of assurance of 'moderate' design and 'substantial' operational effectiveness. The report included a number of areas of good practice, for example, quality improvement coaches and, performance management boards. There was 1 medium priority recommendation in relation to learning walk action plans. Findings confirmed that more detail could be provided so that teaching staff were clear on the required improvements so that action could be taken to improve the quality of teaching for students to achieve their potential. There were also 3 low priority recommendations in relation to the CPD and learning walk schedules; and, performance development reviews (PDRs). The report confirmed the management response and for PDRs, the actions that would be taken by the management team.

The Chair sought confirmation of the extent to which the lockdown had affected the way quality assurance could be monitored and was reassured that the alternative arrangements used as part of the observation process had been carefully reviewed and were similar to those used by other colleges.

b. Student voice and contingency planning (Paper F)

The report carried a level of assurance of 'moderate' design and operational effectiveness. The report included a number of areas of good practice, for example, training in remote delivery and student ambassadors. There were 2 medium priority recommendations in relation to contingency plans and student surveys. Where the former was concerned, the report identified the need for each department to put in place written contingency plans which set out their specific response and allocation of responsibilities. A lessons learned exercise should also be completed to inform future contingency plans. A number of prompts to consider for this exercise were included. In relation to student surveys,

action planning should be completed to include a root cause analysis for all survey results beneath the accepted threshold, both cross-College and at department level. All action plans should be SMART, link clearly to the survey results and include an action owner and implementation date. The low priority recommendation was in relation to digital skills. The report confirmed the management response for each priority and actions to be taken by the management team.

The Principal agreed that the points raised were reasonable and were helpful learning points to take forward. Great progress had been made with sequencing which had been confirmed recently by Ofsted.

c. Human Resources system (Paper G)

This was an advisory review and part of a 3-stage approach to reviewing the implementation activities and the future plans. Three key findings were included in the report in relation to:

- Project governance and controls: now that phase 1 was being delivered and given the importance of the project moving forward additional formality was required in relation to project delivery with regular updates to the SLT;
- Extended duration of the project and appropriate resourcing: completion of a light touch options analysis; and,
- Enhanced business communications and training: training to support effective roll-out of the system; additional communication for the wider College staff; and capturing feedback.

The Principal highlighted the importance of this review and how there was full commitment to ensuring the success of this project. The report didn't emphasise the commitment that had been made to ensure adequate resourcing was being made available to achieve this. Project management arrangements were confirmed; improved communications would be taken forward by this group. What would be most crucial was the way in which this system linked to the wider College systems so that at a press of one button, everyone had everything they needed to hand. The CFO confirmed that initial discussions had taken place with the internal auditor to ensure that a HR audit was included in the plans for the following year and this would be an opportunity to review how successful implementation had been.

d. Internal audit progress report (Paper H)

The Committee was informed that the internal auditors were now half-way through their agreed plan. Three internal audits and one advisory review had been completed. Three further internal audits were planned for the remaining part of the academic year. Considering the circumstances, good progress had been made. The internal auditors were very keen to demonstrate their flexibility and had already questioned whether the days allocated for an area that had already been subject to some scrutiny would be better used for further scrutiny around IT. Decisions to date had been positive with either 'moderate' or 'substantial' assurances given. One area identified that required further improvement was linked to closing the projects down to ensure that the final meeting with the manager focused on the solutions to address the identified risks.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Committee was informed that the internal auditors were confident of completing their work before the next meeting in June 2021.

Resolved: to receive the internal audit reports.

SECTION D – CLOSING ITEMS:

21/08

Any other business (Agenda item 8)

- a. Skills Audit: The Chair informed members that in November 2020, the updated skills audit had been circulated to everyone. Chairs had identified their top 5 skills for their respective committee. Further analysis was required to: ensure any gaps at Committee or Board level can be filled (training, or co-optees); potentially swap governors between committees according to their skillset; and, review scores. In terms of next steps, everyone would be invited to review their own scores as part of a self-validation (Action 31 - Clerk).

21/09

Date of next meeting (Agenda item 9)

The date of next meeting is Monday, 28th June 2021.