

Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 5.30pm
remote online meeting via Zoom

Present:

Dave Navarro – Foundation Governor
Gabrielle Williams Hamer – Co-opted Governor

In attendance:

Clare Baskott - Clerk to Governors
Catherine Biscoe - Partner, Buzzacott LLP, External Auditors (partial attendance)
Graham Thompson - Principal
Margaret Searle - Director of Finance and Resources
Paul Goddard – Representative Scrutton Bland (partial attendance)
Beth Pritchard - Representative Scrutton Bland (partial attendance)

Apologies:

Chiweta Uraih – Foundation Governor

Absent without apologies:

Daniel James-Proffitt – Student Governor

Minutes

The meeting was quorate throughout.
All reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Item 1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee

The Clerk opened the meeting and invited nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee

Gabrielle Williams Hamer was elected as Chair of the Committee.

Dave Navarro was elected as Vice Chair of the Committee.

Item 2 Opening Prayer

The meeting was led in prayer by the Principal at 5:55pm.

Item 3 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Chiweta Uraih.
Daniel James-Proffitt was absent without apologies.

Item 4 Declarations of interest

It was noted that Dave Navarro had recently updated his Declarations of Interest.

It was agreed at this point that the agenda would be rearranged so that the Auditors could present their items first.

Item 5 Committee time with Auditors (if required)

It was noted that prior to the start of the meeting, the Governors had a confidential discussion with the Auditors on the agenda and no matters had been raised that could not be discussed with all the attendees. It was agreed that this will be a confidential item at the beginning of all future meetings.

Item 6 IAS (Internal Audit Service) Scrutton Bland: Presentation and review of Learner Number System assignment report and Key Financial Controls.

Item 6.1 Learner Number System Assignment Report

Paul Goodard from auditors, Scrutton Bland, gave an update and thanked staff at the college for their assistance during the audit.

The Auditor (PG) explained that this was Scrutton Bland's second year of auditing the college's Learner Numbers Systems. The Auditor (PG) reported a high level of compliance and noted the good processes and practice in place and remarked that compliance was higher than that of many other sixth form colleges.

The Auditor (BP) reported that both the recommendations and the added value point from last year's audit had been implemented. The Auditor (PG) paid tribute to the enthusiasm of the MIS department throughout the audit in taking on board their recommendations.

Governor question: What were the added values from the previous year?

Response: The key was updated on the enrolment forms to include learner's religious beliefs.

Item 6.2 Key Financial Controls Audit

The Auditor (PG) gave an overview of the Key Financial Controls audit.

The audits had focused on pay roll, general ledger, and procurement. No significant issues had been found and the audit was strong. All the previous audit's recommendations had been implemented.

The Auditor (PG) reported that one recommendation had been made regarding managing expectations with suppliers and the importance of staff raising purchase orders.

The Auditor (PG) reported that a system should be implemented, so that, if the Director of Finance and Resources was absent her role would be fully covered.

The Auditor (PG) advised that the Financial Regulations should be updated to identify those goods and services which were exceptional items and did not require quotations to be obtained. The Auditor (PG) advised that there should be a short list of purchase

types which would include items such as examinations, utilities, and maintenance and replacements costs that relate to an original tendered purchase.

Governor question: What actions will you take regarding purchase orders?

Response: The process has been fully set out in the updated College's Financial Regulations. Instructions are emailed to staff each term, they are also included in the annual staff updates, and the finance team has an open-door policy.

It was agreed that succession planning for the Director of Finance and Resources will be added to the agenda for the next Governance Committee meeting. Clerk to add to the agenda. **Action: Clerk.**

The Auditor (PG) gave an update and paid tribute to the staff at the college for their assistance during the audit and noted the good level of compliance across the college and the good processes and procedures in place.

Item 7 Regularity and Financial Statements Audits: Buzzacott:

Item 7.1 Audit plan for year ending 31st July 2024 (in papers)

Catherine Biscoe, Partner, Buzzacott LLP, External Auditors gave an overview of the plan as outlined in the Audit Plan documents.

The External Auditor (CB) referred to pages 3, 4 and appendix 1, which detailed the scope of the audits, the timetable and the key changes for this year.

The External Auditor (CB) referred to Item 12.1: the ESFA questionnaire.

The External Auditor (CB) referred to pages 7-10 and the key areas of audit risk and noted the past challenges of recruitment and the improvements that had been made. The External Auditor (CB) explained that on-going capital works will be a key focus for the audit.

The Clerk was reminded to ensure that all annual declarations of interest and Related Party Transactions, are completed this year. **Action: Clerk.**

The External Auditor (CB) referred to the Committee to page 11, and noted Governor's responsibility to ensure that processes and procedures are in place to mitigate fraud and advised that this will be revisited in November 2024.

The External Auditor (CB) referred to the Committee to appendix three, page 17, and explained that Buzzacott LLP, had been the colleges' audit engagement partner for the last ten years and there was a risk of familiarity, and additional measures will be put in place to mitigate these potential risks and preserve the relationship with Buzzacott LLP

Governor question: Are we compliant in relation to the risk of familiarity?

Response: Yes, there has been a change of Audit Manager at Buzzacott LLP, so this year a second partner will review this year's audit.

Governor question: Will we need to address the risk of familiarity next year?
Response: Yes, it would be best practice to have a fresh audit principle going forward.

The external audit strategy was accepted.

The committee thanked the External Auditor for the update.

A discussion took place about the external and internal auditors. The Committee agreed that they were all happy with the current auditing arrangements.

Item 8 Learner Recruitment

It was noted that the Committee had following the previous meeting the Committee had agreed by email, that the next internal audit will focus on Learner Recruitment.

The Committee formally approved the Learner Recruitment audit.

Item 9 Letter of engagement with Buzzacott

It was agreed that this will be forwarded to the Chair of the Committee by email following the meeting. **Action: Clerk/Director of Finance and Resources.**

The Committee thanked the Auditors (CB), (PG) and (BP) for attending. .

The Auditors (CB), (PG) and (BP) left the meeting.

Item 10 Minutes of meeting held on 26th February 2024, for review and approval

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting, 26th February 2024. Clerk to move to the approved minute file for electronic signature. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 11 Matters arising, not covered by agenda items

None.

Item 12 Action points from previous meeting

All completed.

Item 13 Post 16 Audit Code of Practice 2023 to 2024: To receive the updated code and note changes to requirements (listed on page 6).

The Committee noted the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice 2023 to 2024 and the change to requirements (listed on page 6).

Item 14 Update on the College Financial Handbook (March 2024) which will come into effect on 1st August 2024

The Director of Finance and Resources gave an overview of the updated College Financial Handbook (March 2024) and explained that the new Handbook will come into effect on 1st August 2024.

Governor question Will the changes make a big difference?

Response: The major change which came into effect several years ago is that colleges cannot apply for any form of debt and there are changes to Senior Members of staff's pay. However, we were not affected by either of these. Changes in the future

may result in changes to the college's financial year, so that we align with other public institutions and to the insurance guidelines.

Item 15 Regularity Self-Assessment process (*questionnaire in papers*)

The Director of Finance and Resources explained that she will work on the Regularity Self-Assessment process with the Clerk in the autumn term prior to the auditors beginning their work, and this will be reviewed by email by the Audit Committee.

A discussion took place about the Regularity Self-Assessment process.

Item 16 Internal Audit:

It was noted that this had been agreed following the previous meeting.

Item 17 Internal Audit Action Report

No updates.

Item 18 Risk Management:

Item 18.1 Updates to full register for note (*register and action plan in papers – changes highlighted*)

Item 18.2 Principal to present verbal report on key active internal controls and emerging risks.

The Principal gave an overview of the updated risks.

Academisation

The Principal was exploring the option of a PAN London academy and had recently met with the Principal of Christ the King and the Director of Education to discuss the options.

Governor question: Are other colleges in a healthy financial situation?

Response: Most colleges are in a healthy financial situation. However, we do know that one Sixth Form College has had a loan with could prove to be an issue with academisation in the future. We are just exploring options at the moment.

Governor question: Are we receiving our allocation of funding for students with SEN?

Response: SEN funding is always a challenge. The college receives part of the funding from Wandsworth, but we often have to wait for the funding from other local authorities, which can often be a challenge. We are expecting a thematic visit from Ofsted to focus on students who are being supported into adulthood. We currently have two students with high needs who reside in Wandsworth.

Quality

The Principal reported that the college was pleased with the judgement following the recent Ofsted inspection.

Exams

There were concerns about the forthcoming formal examinations, following an increase in students with anxiety. There were also concerns about the whether all students were undertaking appropriate levels of independent study.

See confidential minute 1

Catholic Ethos

The Principal reported that the college was awaiting the Catholic School inspection, which was expected to take place in the autumn term 2024. It was noted that the Associate Principal (CG) was now a CIS inspector. The Principal reported that the Ofsted inspection had recognised the college's Catholic ethos.

Estates

The college had not been successful in the first round of the CIF funding because the college did not use the Good Estate Management system. The college was in the process of appealing both bids.

Staff Recruitment

The college was in the process of setting up at Teacher training hub with a view to training their own teachers, to address the national teacher recruitment crisis.

A discussion took place about the number of trainee teachers the college could training.

Governance Review

The Clerk reported that the external review of governance will take place from May – July 2024. All colleges were required to have completed their reviews by July 2024, as part of their funding agreements. The Clerk gave an overview of what will be involved in the review.

Governor question: Do you think there will be any significant change if there is a change of government following the election?

Response: We are expecting the BTECs to be paused and reviewed for a year. The Association of College are lobbying for a pause until 2027 to make the offer more secure. Students who opt for BTECs would not be able to meet the challenge of T Levels or A Levels. If Labour are elected, they are expected to focus on Early Years.

Item 19 Board Assurance Framework.

It was agreed that the Clerk will circulate the updated Board Assurance Framework with the new Risk Register updates. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 20 Committee business:

Item 20.1 Timetable of meetings for 2024-25 (*draft in papers*)

The Committee approved the timetable of meetings for 2024/25.

Item 20.2 Review of effectiveness and membership (*questionnaire will be online*)

It was agreed that the Clerk will circulate the questionnaire. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 21 Any other business

None.

Item 22 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 12th November 2024 at 5:30pm

Item 23 Closing Prayer

The Principal closed the meeting in prayer at 6:54pm.

_____ Date: _____

Chair of the Committee