



**Audit Committee**  
(via Microsoft Teams)

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Heidi Dixon  
Funmi Esuola  
Angela Hille  
Matthew Konneh  
Zubair Shaikh (Chair)

**In Attendance:** Carol Kirkland  
Shachi Patel (Buzzacott)  
John Rubinstein  
Beth Yap

1.	Governance
2.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting
3.	Matters Arising
4.	Update from Buzzacott
5.	ICT Status Report
6.	Financial Regulations & Procedures
7.	Fraud Report
8.	Health & Safety and Environment
9.	GDPR Update
10.	Risk Management Plan
11.	AOB
12.	Dates of Next Meetings

Minute	Action, Decision or Recommendation	D/R/A
4.	To defer the areas previously agreed for the 2019-20 internal audit to the following year.	D
4.	Buzzacott to continue to conduct the external audit and the College to go out to tender for a new internal auditor in the autumn term.	D
4.	To recommend the 2019-20 internal audit report to the Board for approval.	R
4.	To approve the 2020-21 external audit strategy.	D
6.	To continue to use the current Financial Regulations and Procedures until academisation in January 2021. Future amendments to the Financial Procedures to be considered at management level.	D
7.	Information regarding phishing emails to be included in the next staff bulletin under GDPR.	A

**1. Governance**

**1.1 Apologies for Absence**

None.

**1.2 Declaration of Interest**

None.

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

2.1 The minutes of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record of the events that had taken place.

2.2 It was agreed that, as there was nothing confidential, the minutes would be uploaded to the College website in their entirety.

### 3. Matters Arising

7. **In response to a question from governors**, Carol Kirkland explained that the leak in the sports hall has not yet been repaired, as the College is now closed, and the contractors have not deemed this to be 'essential work'. **In response to another question from governors**, Carol confirmed that signage has now been erected in the College car park to ensure access for emergency vehicles.

### 4. Update from Buzzacott

Shachi Patel, Buzzacott, confirmed that as a result of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown, the only area that has been covered as part of the internal audit was safeguarding.

The Committee considered the audit report on safeguarding. **In response to a question from governors**, both Shachi and members of SLT confirmed that they had nothing further to add to this report. Carol Kirkland confirmed that the recommendations would be added to the audit action plan, which is presented to the Audit Committee at each meeting.

**In response to a question from governors**, Shachi confirmed that the College will only be invoiced for the hours that have been worked and not the original amount.

The Committee discussed the remaining areas for the 2019-20 internal audit. Noting that the autumn term will likely be very busy for the College and the requirement for an internal audit is no longer mandatory, the Committee agreed that the areas previously approved for the 2019-20 internal audit would be deferred to the following year.

Decision

Shachi went on to inform the Committee of the new requirement which prohibits the same organisation conducting both the internal and external audits for the College. It was agreed that Buzzacott should continue to conduct the external audit and the College should go out to tender for a new internal auditor in the autumn term.

Decision

The Committee then considered the external audit strategy for 2020-21 and it was confirmed that this would follow the format of previous years. However, ESFA guidelines have not yet confirmed whether there will be any extension of deadlines as a result of Covid-19.

The Committee went on to discuss College finances. **In response to a question from governors**, John Rubinstein confirmed that lettings are likely to remain cancelled until at least September, which will impact the College financially. John confirmed that the EBITDA should remain positive, but the operating deficit will be larger than originally budgeted. **In response to another**

**question from governors**, John confirmed the College is not expecting to receive any financial support from the ESFA.

The Committee agreed to recommend the 2019-20 internal audit report to the Board for approval and approved the 2020-21 external audit strategy.

Recommendation

Decision

## 5. IT Outages Report

Heidi Dixon presented the Committee with a list of outages that took place from April 2019 to April 2020.

Heidi informed the Committee that one of the largest exercises was the planned migration of staff emails to the cloud. Staff were informed in advance and this was carried out when the College was closed but there were some minor issues. However, this had made the College emails much more secure.

Noting that the majority of outages occurred prior to the lockdown, the **Committee questioned** how the IT team have handled the migration to remote working. Heidi confirmed that the IT team had been looking into this kind of technology for a number of years, which has allowed for a smooth transition.

Heidi confirmed that the only area of difficulty was issuing staff with laptops, as the majority of College laptops were issued to disadvantaged students. Many staff are using their own devices to access their desktop at work. This has made the College consider whether this is the best use of resources and there are now plans to issue teachers with a laptop rather than have a desktop in every classroom.

Noting the removal of E-Safe, **governors questioned** whether this creates a risk for the College. Heidi confirmed that E-Safe was software installed onto college desktops that tracked everything written by a student. Heidi explained that apart from creating a large number of false positives, E-Safe does not track what is written on a student's personal device. Heidi confirmed that the College now uses 'iboss', a filter that restricts access to certain sites on all devices including personal ones.

**Governors questioned** whether staff working from home has been successful. Heidi confirmed that she is able to monitor computer usage and, overall, working from home has been a success. John confirmed that he is getting a lot of feedback from parents and students. The majority of this feedback is very positive, but it seems that the student experience is not consistent across subjects. The Committee agreed that this is understandable given that some members of staff are looking after young children at home whilst continuing to teach.

**In response to a final question from governors**, John confirmed that, following guidance from the government, it is likely that the College will re-open after half term in June, on a voluntary basis. The library will open with social distancing, and staff, who want to, may teach small groups of students with social distancing. The College currently aims to have a full timetable from September.

## 6. Financial Regulations and Procedures

Usually the Committee would review and approve updated versions of the College's financial regulations and procedures at this meeting. However, as the College is planning to academise at the end of the calendar year, it was agreed that the current Financial Regulations and Procedures should continue to be used until academisation. The Committee agreed that, in future, the Financial Procedures should be approved at management level and only the Financial Regulations should be presented to the Committee for approval.

Decision

**In response to a question from governors,** Carol confirmed that the finance team have been in College regularly as there is some work that cannot be carried out from home. The Committee noted that payments are taking place as usual and all financial procedures are being adhered to.

## 7. Fraud Report

None.

However, the Committee noted that, as a result of Covid-19, there has been an increase in phishing emails. It was agreed that information on phishing emails should be included in the next staff bulletin under GDPR.

Action

## 8. Health & Safety and Environment

Carol Kirkland confirmed that there have been no accidents since the figures that were reported to the Board in March. Carol confirmed that currently there are only 4 or 5 members of staff on site at one time.

**In response to a question from governors,** John Rubinstein confirmed that student services are monitoring vulnerable students along with those that are not engaging in online teaching.

Carol informed the Committee that she is currently drafting 3 risk assessments:

- No students on site (current situation)
- Some students on site – on a voluntary basis (expected from June)
- All students back on site (expected from September).

## 9. GDPR Update

The Committee was informed that there had been 4 breaches since its last meeting, making a total of 7 this year. The Clerk confirmed that these were all caused by human error, such as incorrect email recipients.

The Committee noted that one breach was reported to the ICO. After a discussion on the phone with the ICO, a report was received with recommendations, all of which have been put into place to reduce to the risk of this happening again. The Clerk confirmed that the breach was deemed to be 'low risk' by the ICO and the College did not receive a financial penalty.

## 10. Risk Management

John Rubinstein presented the College's risk management plan, explaining that this has been updated to take into account the risks associated with Covid-19. John explained that it is expected that student enrolment could be under target

in September 2020, as students may want to stay at their current school due to the disruption of Covid-19. John reminded the Committee that, if the College was to recruit below its target numbers, this would impact the College financially the following year.

John explained that during lockdown, the College's safeguarding team is monitoring around 50 students and the recent internal audit has improved safeguarding even further.

The Committee noted that the Maths School project has received positive feedback from the DfE but the College is waiting to receive its formal decision.

John confirmed that Ofsted has suspended its inspections this term and this may continue into next term. However, John reminded the Committee that the College has not had an inspection since 2008 and will be one of the first once inspections commence again. **In response to a question from governors**, John explained that, due to no formal exams being taken this summer, the inspection would probably focus on the quality of teaching and learning at the College. **In response to a follow-up question from governors**, John confirmed that 16-19 academies and sixth form colleges are inspected under the same Ofsted regime.

Noting the risk of poor achievement, retention and progression, John explained that the main area of concern is the current year 12s who have lost a large amount of teaching time this year.

John confirmed that the College has conducted a large amount of recruitment via Microsoft Teams and has been able to fill previously hard-to-fill posts.

John explained that staff morale is currently difficult to gauge, due to the current circumstances. The Committee was informed that the pay award for teaching and support staff has now been agreed and will be backdated from September 2019.

John reminded the Committee that this year was always going to be difficult financially and Covid-19 has made this even more so with the loss of College lettings (around £150k).

John then drew attention to a second risk management plan, which specifically deals with the risks relating to Covid-19.

John confirmed that, due to the heightened need for safeguarding, the College is communicating more frequently with parents and this has been gratefully received.

As no formal exams will take place this summer, the College will be submitting 'centre assessed grades' for its year 13 students. However, OFQAL has stated that no institution can improve their results beyond the last 3 years. This means that there can be no improvement in the College's A level grades, and it is likely to mean that some students will be disappointed with their results. This may impact on university progression, although there will be many places in Clearing this year.

**In response to a question from governors,** John confirmed that the College cannot furlough staff as income is received directly from the government.

**In response to another question from governors,** John explained that teaching online has been successful due to staff already having a relationship with the students. However, the College would be reluctant to do this with new students going forward in order to reach a larger pool of students.

**11. AOB**

Noting that this would be her last Committee meeting, the Chair thanked Carol Kirkland for all her hard work and wished her a happy retirement.

**12. Dates of Next Meetings**

6th July 2020

BOARD

The meeting concluded at 7:05pm.