

# EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 March 2021 via Zoom

**Present**

Sarah Brampton	Chair
Neil Hitchings	Vice Chair
Jo Matthews	Co-opted

**Observers**

Rob Hutchins
Adele Westcott

#### In Attendance

<i>For item 3 only</i>	David Allen	Chair of the Corporation
<i>For item 3 only</i>	Glenn Woodcock	Governor
<i>For item 3 only</i>	Emma Webber	Governor
<i>For item 3 only</i>	Tim Quine	Governor
	John Laramy	Principal/CEO
<i>For item 3 only</i>	Rob Bosworth	Deputy Principal/CEO
<i>To item 7 only</i>	Lee Rhodes	Tiaa
<i>From item 6 only</i>	Toby Coombes	Director of Finance, Funding and MIS
	Alison Layton-Hill	Clerk to the Corporation

**Apologies**                      None

#### 1. **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest** **Action**

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting. There were no apologies or declarations of interest received.

#### 2. **Matters arising**

2.1 Appointments to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee  
To support its independence, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee membership is not determined by the Board. The Committee considered the CVs of Rob Hutchins and Adele Westcott.

**The Committee approved the appointment of Rob Hutchins and Adele Westcott to serve as co-opted members on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

*Rob Hutchins, Adele Westcott, David Allen, Emma Webber, Glenn Woodcock and Rob Bosworth joined the meeting*

The Chair warmly welcomed Rob and Adele to the Committee, conveyed that she hoped they will enjoy supporting the College by serving on the Committee and looked forward to meeting them in person.

### 3. **Deep Dive**

#### 3.1 Covid-19 Risk Assurance including plans for re-opening

The Deputy Principal/CEO gave a presentation on Covid-19 Risk Assurance and outlined the plans that the College had engaged in to re-open safely. The Committee noted the membership and function of the Covid Operations Group and the number of cases at the College, which had been minimal. Students returned to College on 11 March 2021 and the feedback from students and parents on the measures that had been put in place had been positive.

The Deputy Principal/CEO explained the testing process, which is voluntary but encouraged, and thanked the University of Exeter for their invaluable assistance.

Governors were pleased with the high numbers of students attending for testing and sought clarity as to how that engagement would continue when testing is carried out at home. It was confirmed that there is a system in place and students will be alerted by text to update their results, however it was accepted that the level of take up may reduce.

Governors asked what the major risk was in terms of students returning to College and noted that social space was a challenge, although extra space had been provided, both in classrooms and outside under marquees. There may also be the opportunity to acquire additional property in the city centre at a reasonable cost. The reputation of the College remains a risk and as students return to Queen Street there may be concerns raised by the public, although the College had engaged with the police, the City Council and transport operators.

The Committee was reassured in terms of everything that the College had done and thanked the leadership team and all staff involved.

### **The Committee thanked the Deputy Principal/CEO for his presentation**

*David Allen, Emma Webber, Glenn Woodcock and Rob Bosworth left the meeting*

### 4. **Minutes**

#### 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020, as circulated, were agreed by the Committee.

#### 4.2 The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020, as circulated, were agreed by the Committee.

### 5. **Risk Management Update**

#### 5.1 Risk Register

The Committee received the risk register and the Chief Financial Officer highlighted the changes since the previous Committee.

New risks:

R61 – Uncertainty regarding 20/21 exam dates and methodology

This risk was added to the risk register at a time when there was a high level of uncertainty around exam dates and methodology. Since that time, clarity had been received which had given greater confidence in the process, and therefore this risk had been mitigated to a 'medium' risk.

R62 - Failure to control and deliver capital and revenue projects

The College is currently engaged in a significant amount of capital and revenue work whereby £20m has been invested over an 18 month period. There is a need to ensure that there are clear processes and careful monitoring of the projects.

Reduced risks:

R58 - Failure to recruit 16-18 learners for 2021/22

Due to the inability to offer face to face interviews and open days earlier in the academic year the level of recruitment was uncertain, however recruitment has been positive leading to this risk being reduced.

R42 – Brexit: Impact of leaving the EU

The risk concerning the impact of Brexit had also been reduced as although there are international students attending the College, the actual impact had been low.

It was acknowledged that the current risk register works well but there were also opportunities for its evolution to ensure that it is aligned to the new strategic plan, there is clarity around the level of risk the College is willing to accept and it links to the internal audit programme. The Committee was keen to support the development of the risk register and work towards an assurance map.

**The Committee voted to recommend the risk register to the Board on 30 April 2021**

**Clerk**

## **6. Internal Audit Service**

### **6.1 Internal Audit Programme progress**

Lee Rhodes from Tiaa introduced himself and outlined the progress that had been made against the internal audit plan for the current academic year.

Two audits had been completed the previous week:

- Business Continuity Planning (pandemic response)
- Governance – Performance Monitoring

The reports will be finalised and presented to the next meeting, however the committee noted that there were no material issues and both would record substantial assurance.

The Committee questioned whether the increase in the practice of working at home had impacted on the risk of fraud, which was confirmed. The

Committee noted the importance of robust processes around independent financial validation.

The Committee questioned whether there is confidence that the 35 days allocated to internal audit would be completed and whether the Committee would receive sufficient detail to give assurance that the controls had been tested. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the remaining audits are scheduled and that there are 9 contingency days to be allocated. He suggested that the proposal for the remainder of the year will be brought to the next meeting and assured the committee that the programme will focus on the areas of the risk register where there is the most concern.

It was agreed that internal audit is a tool for both the Committee and the leadership team and that the internal audit programme will consider the pressures on staff in the current climate.

The Committee requested an update as to when it would receive assurance that the cyber essentials certification will be complete. There had been a delay due to a change in personnel, however it was confirmed that the certification will be complete by the end of March 2021.

### **The Committee noted the progress of the internal audit programme**

#### **6.2 Internal Audit Actions progress**

The Committee was advised that the two internal audit actions that had been reported as outstanding were now completed.

### **The Committee noted the update**

*Lee Rhodes left the meeting*

## **7. External Auditor**

- 7.1 Item 7.1 was dealt with as a confidential item in accordance with the College's confidentiality policy and recorded in the confidential minutes.

## **8. Emerging Risks**

The Committee considered that there were no additional risks to add to the risk register that had emerged during the meeting.

## **9. Future Meetings**

- 9.1 The Committee agreed to take the following items to the Board:
- Covid-19 deep dive update
  - Rob Hutchins and Adele Westcott's appointment to the Committee
  - Risk Register
  - Re-appointment of the external auditor
  - Internal audit programme

9.2 Items for next meeting  
The Committee reviewed and agreed the cycle of business for the 7 June 2021 meeting.

9.3 Date of meetings  
• 7 June 2021

10. **Items for Information**

10.1 Anti-Fraud register

Signed by the Chair



Date: 7 June 2021