**The Corporation of Newham Sixth Form College**

**Audit & Risk Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 June 2020**

**Members**

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| Jay Nair (Chair) | Independent Member | Present |
| Sohidul Hoque | Independent Member | Present |
| Julianne Marriott | Independent Member | Present |
| Martin Oakeshott | Independent Member | Present |

**Non-Members invited to attend**

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| Graeme Clarke | Mazars | Present |
| Adrian Cottrell | Interim Director of Finance & Resources | Present |
| Mandeep Gill | Principal & Chief Executive | Present |
| Robin Jones | Clerk to the Corporation | Present |
| Silvan Koterba | Mazars | Present |

**1 VICE PRINCIPAL FINANCE & OPERATIONS**

The Chair on behalf of the Committee welcomed Michael Gainall to the meeting as the new Vice Principal Finance & Operations.

**2 INTERIM DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & RESOURCES**

Members of the Committee acknowledged the important, indeed outstanding, contribution of Adrian Cottrell who was about to complete the period of engagement as the Interim Director of Finance & Operations.

**3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Committee noted that all Members were present on this occasion.

**4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The Members and others present confirmed that there were no declarations of interest to be recorded on this occasion.

**5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 MAY 2020**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 6 May 2020 were agreed to be a correct record.

**6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 MAY 2020**

The Committee:

1. reviewed the actions agreed at the last meeting which had been progressed or were being progressed
2. agreed that there were no matters arising from the Minutes of the last meeting which required attention at this time.

**7 RISK**

The Committee received the report of the Interim Director of Finance and the updated Risk Register for 2019/20.

The known and potential impact pandemic COVID – 19 on the 14 areas of risk were highlighted including the changes in the past month.

The most significant change was on student numbers where it was thought appropriate to increase the risk level from 10 in May to 15 in June, Whilst application numbers were extremely encouraging, the pandemic had introduced a large element of uncertainty regrading enrolment for September 2020.

Paradoxically it was thought appropriate to reduce the level of risk for the pandemic category from 12 to 9 because of the extensive planning and precautions being taken for the partial reopening of the College on 15 June 2020.

In response to a question from a Member it was explained that the position for High Needs Funding was better than in previous years. A further payment to the College was already guaranteed by the London Borough of Newham and time was being given to working through claims to maximise income.

The Principal & Chief Executive went on to advise the Committee that arrangements had been put in place to cover for the departure of the current Assistant Principal Student Services who acted as the Safeguarding Lead. Martin Reed who was an experienced practitioner was taking over some responsibilities and others had been allocated elsewhere within the College organisation. A post of Wellbeing Manager was included in the new College structure to be put in place in the Autumn.

The Committee AGREED following discussion:

1. to note the updated Risk Register including the impact to various aspects of the themes of COVID – 19
2. to note that the impact of student enrolment in September 2020 would be the subject of updates to the Corporation and, as and when appropriate, the Audit & Risk Committee via the Risk Register
3. to look forward to receiving further updates to the Risk Register at future meetings of the Committee.

**8 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AUDITORS – APPROACH FOR CARRYING OUT THE 2019/20 AUDIT**

The Committee NOTED that a meeting between representatives of Buzzacott and the Vice Principal Finance & Operations was scheduled for 12 June 2020 to discuss the arrangements for carrying out the end of year audit of the Financial Statements.

A Member asked about the impact of possibly not being back in College by the time of the fieldwork. It was explained that there was no reason at all why the audit could not be undertaken remotely with files being provided electronically.

The Committee AGREED following discussion:

1. to NOTE that a meeting with Buzzacotts was scheduled for 12 June 2020 to discuss the 2019/20 audit arrangements and that it was not anticipated that there would be no material changes from past years other than to recognise the impact of the pandemic
2. to recognise that it may be appropriate to add the possible uncertainties of the audit to the Risk Register but, at this stage, to leave this to the College Executive to consider in the light of developments
3. to look forward to receiving an update in due course on the audit

**9 INTERNAL AUDIT - IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee received the updated summary of progress against the Internal Audit recommendations and the associated report of the Interim Director of Finance.

The Committee AGREED:

1. to NOTE the progress against the Internal Audit recommendations
2. to recognise that a number of the recommendations had now been progressed and could, therefore, be removed from the schedule
3. to look forward to receiving a further update at the next meeting of the Committee

**10 INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2019/20**

The Committee received and discussed the report of the Interim Director of Finance relating internal audit arrangements for the remainder of 2019/20.

Whilst the Internal Audit outcomes were important it was explained that other areas of evidence could inform the end of year opinion to be cited in the Financial Statements in terms of governance and internal controls.

To help inform the end of year opinion the Internal Auditors would be carrying out a review of governance during the week of 22 June 2020.

A Member observed, in the context of risks and the preparation of a view on the governance and internal controls that the Corporation had several vacancies and arrangements were being put in place to identify potential new Corporation Members. In this respect, therefore, at this time the current position should be seen as amber and not green. Indeed, the membership of the Corporation is bound to see changes from time to time with the loss but also the addition of new skills and experience.

The Committee AGREED:

1. to NOTE the report of the Interim Director of Finance on the arrangements for providing an assurance on governance and internal controls based on a matrix
2. to look forward to receiving the report of the Internal Auditors following the completion of the review of governance

**11 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

The Committee was advised that at the meeting on 20 May 2020 the Corporation had agreed to ask the Committee to look again at the proposed updated College Whistleblowing Policy with regard to the content of the AoC model.

The Principal & Chief Executive was of the view that the AoC model was similar to the one proposed for NewVIc but he had added aspects to address the points raised by the Committee during the discussions at the last two meetings of the Audit & Risk Committee.

The Committee AGREED following discussion:

1. to review the proposed updated version of the Whistleblowing Policy outside of the meeting and to signify approval or otherwise to the Clerk by 18 June 2020
2. to note the intention to present the document to the Corporation on 15 July 2020 for approval and introduction on, if practicable, 1 August 2020
3. to note the arrangements in place to ensure that all members of staff, including new appointees, were aware of the update to the Whistleblowing Policy and could access it for reference.

**12 INTERNAL AUDIT – APPOINTMENT FOR 2020/21 ONWARDS**

The Committee NOTED that the Internal Audit tender invitation would be finalised over the summer so that shortlisting and interviews could be arranged early in the Autumn Term 2020.

An additional meeting of the Committee would be arranged for the Committee once the timeline was finalised.

Once appointed an Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 would be prepared for consideration by the Committee and recommendation to the Corporation.

**13 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee AGREED that the next scheduled meeting would be on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 6.30 pm (start time to be confirmed nearer to the date).

Members recognised that, as recorded in item 12 above, one or more additional meeting would need to be arranged to progress the interviews and proposed appointments of the Auditors.

**14 COVID-19**

At the invitation of Members the Principal & Chief Executive outlined the plans for a limited reopening of the College on 15 June 2020.

Members appreciated that they had received the notes of the Ad Hoc Group of Corporation Members and the Executive which had met on 2 June 2020. A further meeting had taken place immediately before this meeting of the Committee and these notes would follow for the information of all Members.

The initial experience of reopening would be addressed at the meting of the Corporation on 17 June 2020.

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_