

HILLS ROAD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Audit Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 14 December 2015 at 6.00pm

Present:

Independent Chair Laragh Jeanroy

Corporation Members Peter Brindle, Edmund Brookes, Jonathan Culpin, Dinesh Jacob, Julie Taylor

Clerk to the Committee Robert Smith

Observers Jill Aberdour (Assistant Principal – Resources), Rory Seddon (Director of Business and Finance),

Principal Business

| <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 5 | Risk Management |
| 6 | Risk Management Annual Report |

1. Apologies for Absence/Quoracy

All members were present. Mark Ashton-Blanksby (Icca: internal audit service) was unable to be in attendance.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 10 November 2015

The minutes were approved as a correct record of the business transacted, and *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings to which they relate.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

It was reported that an email had been received from Rakesh Shaunak, of MacIntyre Hudson, apologising for the late issue of the Management Letter and for the errors it contained. Assurances were given that future documents would be issued on time and without inaccuracies.

5. Risk Management Registers

Risk Registers, highlighted to record revisions, updates and deletions, were received for consideration in connection with the following activities: teaching, support and guidance, enterprise, estates, finances, IT, leadership and management, governance.

In relation to the first risk under Leadership & Management (Area Review), members commented that:

- the College is to be included in the November 2016 wave of reviews;
- a preliminary study being undertaken jointly with Long Road Sixth Form College will be finalised and reported on in the near future; *and*
- academisation should be included as a risk in its own right since not only are the conditions for academy conversion restrictive, but also the advantages of conversion are not unambiguously in the College's favour;

In relation to the fourth risk under Leadership & Management (Public Funding), members commented that:

- preservation of the funding rate at its present cash value until May 2020 is a real-term reduction in funding (equivalent to c.8% over the period, given reasonable inflation assumptions); *and*
- other funding reductions are to be announced in the new year, and it is likely that some of these will impact negatively on the College in ways that cannot yet be predicted.

In relation to the sixth risk under Leadership & Management (Safeguarding), members commented that:

- internal audit assurance that the College is managing the level of risk appropriately is being sought in the Spring Term; *and*
- since Ofsted may carry out a specific inspection of safeguarding at any time, members of the Corporation are recommended to avail themselves of a training opportunity being provided during the next staff development period (June 2016).

In relation to the penultimate risk under IT (Sole Knowledge), members commented that the risk is being addressed but requires continuing review at the present time.

More generally, concern was expressed that backup systems may not have been subject to sufficiently robust testing (e.g. running the College system entirely from backups), and that in the event of a major disaster the Sports Centre may not be distant enough from the College to serve as a viable backup location.

To explore these and other issues, it was agreed that the Head of IT be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to answer members' questions.

In relation to the second risk under Support & Guidance (Curriculum Balance), members commented that:

- the College's commitment to a broad curriculum offer (as part of its mission and character) is not assisted by the new arrangements agreed for admissions by the Cambridgeshire Area Partnership, nor by the move to a linear 3 A level curriculum from September 2016, and certain subjects are therefore at greater risk of not having enough students recruited to their courses;
- to avoid this, a flexible application of admission criteria, both in terms of entry requirements and the home address of students, will be important in maintaining the numbers recruited for minority subjects.

Members additionally agreed a number of measures intended to increase committee effectiveness, namely:

- at each meeting at which the Risk Register is considered, risks relating to a particular area of the College's activities will be examined in depth and, to this end, relevant staff will be invited to be present to answer members' questions, the arrangement for IT at the next meeting being the first instance of this arrangement;
- when examining risks under this new arrangement it will be important for members to hold in mind a clear distinction between governance and management and frame their concerns accordingly;
- individual risks should be numbered sequentially throughout the Register to assist ease of reference; *and*
- the dates of meetings of the College Strategy Team at which the Risk Register is considered should be identified and circulated to Audit Committee members well in advance to facilitate their attendance.

The registers were recommended for approval by the Corporation.

6 Risk Management Annual Report

A report prepared by the Assistant Principal (Resources) was received for information and recommended for approval by the Corporation.

7 Business for the Corporation

Agenda 5-6 were approved as business for the Corporation meeting to be held on 10 February 2016.

8 Any Other Competent Business

None

9 Dates and Times of Next Meetings

Wednesday 24 February 2016 (6.00pm)
Monday 6 June 2016 (6.00pm)