

Audit & Compliance Committee

Monday 14th June 2021

Minutes

Present: Sugra Alibhai
Heidi Dixon
Angela Hille
Linda Horbye
Matthew Konneh
Zubair Shaikh (Chair)
Ellie Smith

In Attendance: Subarna Banerjee (item 4)
Shachi Blakemore (item 5 & 6)
Claire Mugridge
Beth Yap

1.	Governance
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting
3.	Matters Arising
4.	Internal Scrutiny
5.	Woodhouse Financial Accounts
6.	Confidential Meeting with Auditors
7.	Audit Action Plan
8.	IT Status Report
9.	Risk Management Plan
10.	Fraud Report
11.	Health & Safety Report
12.	GDPR
13.	Any Other Business
14.	Dates of Next Meetings

Minute	Decision /Action	D/A
1.3	To appoint Ellie Smith as Vice Chair of the Audit & Compliance Committee	D
5.	To recommend the final Woodhouse accounts to the Board for approval.	D
7.	Recommendations from the internal scrutiny report to be added to the audit action plan.	A
8.	Senior Leadership Team to discuss staff passwords expiration, cyber security training and Cyber Essential Plus certification.	A
14.	Prior to the next meeting, UHY Hacker Young to present a number of areas for the Committee to consider for future internal scrutiny.	A

1. Governance

1.1. Apologies
None.

1.2 Declaration of Interest
None declared.

1.3 Appointment of Vice Chair

It was agreed to appoint Ellie Smith as Vice Chair of the Audit &

Decision

Compliance Committee.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 1st March 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record of the events that took place. It was agreed that item 2 should be removed prior to the minutes being uploaded to the Trust's website.

3. Matters Arising.

1.4 The Clerk confirmed that the Committee's Terms of Reference have been amended to include an annual review of the Trust's finance policy. In addition to this, the composition of the Board document has been circulated and will be included in the papers for each meeting.

2. Claire Mugridge confirmed that the recent internal audit included a review of the risk register, governance arrangements and finance policy.

5. At its last meeting, the **Committee challenged** how the ICLMS Steering Group was monitoring and mitigating potential risks. As a result of this discussion, the Steering Group has drafted a risk register which was presented to the Committee for information.

4. Internal Scrutiny Report

Subarna Banashee presented the internal scrutiny report on behalf of UHY Hacker Young, reminding the Committee that this was a thorough audit with a large amount of testing and the Trust was compliant in the majority of areas.

Subarna went on to inform the Committee that there were four recommendations as a result of the audit, all of which were low risk.

The Committee noted that, as the Remuneration Committee has not met since the Trust's inception, the rationale behind the decision-making process for the remuneration of senior post holders was not available for review. However, the Remuneration Committee is due to meet in November.

Subarna explained that, in reviewing the Trust's financial handbook, it was noted that the 'contentious payment policy' was missing. Claire Mugridge informed the Committee that this will either be implemented as a separate policy or incorporated in the finance policy when it is reviewed in January 2022.

The Committee noted that a VAT claim has now been submitted for the period 1 January 2021 to 30 April 2021 and monthly claims will be submitted once this first claim has been approved. No VAT returns had been submitted for the period ending 31st March 2021 due to some issues with the accounting system. Claire informed the Committee that these have now been resolved and the Trust should be able to submit claims as planned.

The final recommendation was that the Trust set up automatic email signatures that include the Trust name, registered office and company number. Claire explained that the Trust would be implementing this from September.

Noting that the inclusion of company information is required by company law, the **Committee questioned** why this change was not being implemented until September. Claire confirmed that the Trust is eager to get this right and ensure consistency with all staff. Subarna confirmed that there is no risk in waiting until September.

The Committee thanked Subarna for his comprehensive report.

5. Woodhouse Finance Accounts

Shachi Blakemore presented the financial accounts, reminding the Committee that this is the last set of financial statements for Woodhouse College as a legal entity. Shachi explained that, even though Woodhouse is no longer a legal entity it must still submit accounts for the period when it was open. Therefore, these accounts are up until 31 December 2020. The Committee noted that, as all of the College's assets transferred to Frontier Learning Trust, this is reflected in the going concern statement.

The Committee was reminded that, in the year to 31 December 2020, the College achieved a deficit of £24,172 before actuarial losses of £248k. **In response to a question from the Committee**, Claire explained that this is the Local Government Pension Scheme liability, which is reviewed every 3 years and confirmed by Barnet. The Committee also noted that, since becoming an Academy, this liability is insured by the government.

The Committee approved the accounts subject to minor amendments and agreed that these should be recommended to the Board for approval.

Decision

Shachi informed the Committee that, as a result of academising, the next set of accounts will look very different to what the Board is used to.

6. Confidential meeting with Auditors.

All employees of the Trust withdrew from this item and no minutes were taken.

When the staff returned, the Committee questioned whether the Trust was prepared for its first audit as an Academy and whether the finance team has enough resources to manage this. Claire explained that she does not foresee any problems but acknowledged that there will be a lot to work through. Shachi confirmed that Buzzacott will support the Trust in preparing for the audit. Claire went on to explain that the finance team was looking for a temporary member of staff, but this is no longer the case.

7. Audit Action Plan

The Committee reviewed the audit action plan, noting that there is currently only one outstanding action, which is the formal review of My Concern. The Committee noted that this review will take place in the autumn term, when College life has returned to normal.

In response to a question from governors, Sugra Alibhai confirmed that she and Lubna Hussain will undertake the review and agree the key metrics

beforehand. Sugra explained that it is important that they also confirm that staff are using My Concern in the correct way.

The Committee also noted that the recommendations from the internal scrutiny report would be added to the audit action plan.

Action

8. IT Status Report

Heidi Dixon had nothing further to add to her report, which outlined the outages that have taken place over the last 12 months.

In response to a question from the Committee, Heidi confirmed that the Trust has achieved Cyber Essentials Security, it was not able to achieve Cyber Essentials Security Plus, due to the current infrastructure that is in place, but this is due to be upgraded over the summer.

The Committee went on to discuss the security of staff accounts, noting that the Trust requires that staff change their password on an annual basis. **The Committee requested** that the Senior Leadership Team discuss whether staff passwords should be changed more regularly, along with cyber security training and the Cyber Essential Plus certification.

Action

It was agreed that, should the Trust wish for its cyber security to be tested, this should be conducted by a specialist, rather than the internal auditors.

The Committee thanked Heidi for her report and agreed that the transparency of this report is valuable.

9. Risk Management Plan

Sugra Alibai informed the Committee that from next year, there will be a Frontier Learning Trust risk management plan as well as a Woodhouse College risk management plan. The Chair agreed to work with Sugra to develop these for September.

Sugra discussed each risk in turn but drew special attention to safeguarding, explaining that this is something the Trust needs to improve and there are plans to make the College site more secure and ensure that all students and staff wear ID badges at all times. Claire Mugridge informed the Committee that a new electronic signing in system is also being installed.

The Committee noted that a reduction in Ofsted grade is a potential risk, due to the effects of lockdown on progress and achievements. Sugra explained that these are key focuses of the strategic plan.

Under staff morale, Sugra explained that she has met with every member of staff to discuss their concerns and how the College can improve. The Committee noted that a large amount of time has been invested in the June INSET days with a view to making the staff feel more connected with each other.

10. Fraud Report

None.

11. Health & Safety Report

The Committee considered the health & safety report, noting that there was an accident in the hall where a student injured their wrist, but this did not require RIDDOR notification.

Claire Mugridge reminded the Committee that Covid continues to be a focus for the Trust, explaining that there has been one case this term. **In response to a question from the Committee**, Claire explained that, due to the measures that are in place, no one except the student was required to self-isolate.

The Committee congratulated the Trust on its handling of Covid, noting in particular the low number of cases that it has had. **In response to a question from the Committee**, Claire went on to explain that self-testing can only be encouraged by the Trust and this is difficult to monitor.

12. GDPR

Beth Yap informed the Committee that since the last meeting there has been one subject access request and two breaches. Beth explained that all breaches that have taken place this year have been as a result of human error when emailing and confirmed that none of these were high risk or required ICO notification.

The Committee noted that the Trust is preparing to receive Subject Access Requests as part of the Teacher Assessment Grades appeal process but was informed that a comprehensive process has been put in place to determine these. Sugra informed the Committee that this process takes into account unconscious bias, less experienced teachers and smaller departments. Spot checking will also take place to avoid administrative errors and ensure consistency.

13. AOB

It was agreed that UHY Hacker Young should present a number of areas for the Committee to consider for future internal scrutiny and these would be circulated in advance of the next meeting.

Action

14. Dates of Next Meetings

To be circulated.

The meeting concluded at 7:40pm