Audit & Compliance Committee

Monday 14th March 2022

Minutes

Present:

Sugra Alibhai
Angela Hille
Linda Horbye
Zubair Shaikh (Chair)
Ellie Smith

In Attendance:

Mat Edwards (until item 5)
Claire Mugridge
Jeremy Ruff
Beth Yap

1.	Governance
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting
3.	Matters Arising
4.	Confidential Item
5.	Review of Audit Action Plan
6.	Internal Scrutiny
7.	Policies
8.	Risk Management Plan
9.	Health & Safety Report
10.	Fraud Report
11.	GDPR Report
12.	SMRA
13.	Any Other Business

Minute	Decision /Action/Recommendation	D/A/R
4.	Confidential action.	A
4.	Confidential action.	A
5.	Audit action plan to outline whether an action has arisen from the internal or external audit and include details of when this was added.	A
7.	To approve the Trust Finance Policy, subject to a number of amendments.	D
7.	To approve the Trust Complaints Policy, subject to minor amendments.	D
8.	To ensure that the Audit & Compliance Committee is not shown as the 'owner' of any operational risk on the risk register.	A
9.	Health & Safety report to include context and 'lessons learnt', in addition to the accident data.	A
9.	Senior Leadership Team to investigate how other colleges monitor who is on site at any time, particularly with a view to fire evacuations.	A
12.	To recommend the School Management Resource Self-Assessment to the Board for electronic approval. Senior Leadership Team to consider the process for approving this in the future.	R/A

1. **Governance**
   1.1. **Apologies**
      Funmi Esuola and Matthew Konneh.

1.2 Declaration of Interest
None declared.

2. Minutes
The minutes of the meeting of 22nd November 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record of the events that took place, with one minor amendment. It was agreed that the minutes could be uploaded to the Trust's website in their entirety.

3. Matters Arising.
6. The review of My Concern was shared with Ruth Henrywood, Safeguarding Trustee, and no further feedback was received.
8. Sugra Alibhai confirmed that a reminder on phishing was included in the staff briefing of 8th November 2021. In addition to this, the Trust has seen an increase in the number of staff raising concerns about emails they have received and asking for these to be quarantined, which shows that staff are becoming more aware of the potential risks around cyber security.

4. Confidential Item
Confidential minute.

5. Review of Audit Action Plan
Beth Yap presented the audit action plan highlighting that all actions have now been completed, including the implementation of automatic email signatures and VAT claims being submitted on a monthly basis. The Committee congratulated the team on having all actions completed.

It was requested that the action plan clearly outlines whether an action has arisen from the internal or external audit and includes details of when this was added.

Action

6. Internal Scrutiny
Claire Mugridge informed the Committee that the cycle of internal scrutiny would recommence next term and UHY have presented the potential areas for audit, which include:

- Payroll & HR
- Procurement
- Data security
- Risk Management
- VAT/ Income

7. Policies
Claire Mugridge presented the Trust's Finance Policy, highlighting the amendments that had been made as a result of the new DfE Academy Trust

Handbook. The Committee suggested a number of amendments, including outlining how the delegated responsibilities are reviewed and the process for approving the annual accounts. The Committee approved the Finance Policy, subject to these amendments.

<div align="right">Decision</div>

Beth Yap presented the Trust's Complaints Policy, explaining that this has been amended to tighten up processes for dealing with complaints, as well as to clearly outline the responsibilities of those investigating the complaints.

The Committee approved the Complaints Policy, subject to minor amendments that make the various stages of the complaint explicit.

<div align="right">Decision</div>

8. **Risk Register**

Sugra Alibhai presented the Trust's risk register, explaining that this now shows whether a risk has increased or decreased since the last meeting.

The Committee then considered each risk in turn, noting that the risk around recruitment is still 'high' as a result of the pandemic, despite a recruitment strategy being developed, whilst risks around covid have decreased due to the vaccination take up and withdrawal of government restrictions.

Whilst considering the risks around student enrolment, the Committee was pleased to note the 13% increase in applications this year.

The Committee then discussed the increased risk of the site being compromised with an intruder, noting that this had taken place recently. **In response to a question from the Committee**, Sugra explained that there is now a push from staff to ensure that all students are wearing lanyards in College and ensuring they do not tailgate each other when entering the building.

The Committee expressed concern and asked whether anything else could be done to make the site more secure. Sugra confirmed that the Premises Manager is working with the police to see how the site can be made more secure but highlighted that the main work to do here is around the culture of the College to ensure that students know that this is unacceptable. Sugra also explained that any student who has let an unauthorised person into College automatically receives a stage 3 disciplinary.

Finally, the Chair requested that the Audit & Compliance Committee is not shown as the 'owner' of any operational risk on the risk register.

<div align="right">Action</div>

9. **Health & Safety Report**

The Committee considered the health & safety report, noting that this now contained more data relating to accidents. Claire Mugridge explained that none of these accidents required RIDDOR notification or was due to any fault of the College. **The Committee requested** that, in addition to the data, context and 'lessons learnt' should be included in the report.

<div align="right">Action</div>

Claire also informed the Committee that a health & safety audit has recently taken place, which saw no 'red' recommendations that needed immediate

action.

In response to a question from the Committee, Claire confirmed that there are still issues with the fire alarm system, with a manual intervention currently in place, and explained that the College has a large number of fire wardens who sweep the building to ensure that this is empty during an evacuation.

Noting the earlier discussion regarding lanyards, **the Committee questioned** how the College can ensure it knows who is on site at any time in the event of a fire and Sugra explained that the majority of students are in lessons but, in the event of a fire, congregation areas, such as the Hub and library are swept by fire wardens. However, Sugra went on to explain that the College is looking to review its approach and investigating the installation of equipment that registers attendance when a student scans their lanyards.

The Committee discussed the difficulty in knowing who is on site at any time due to the nature of the College but **requested** that the Senior Leadership Team investigate how other colleges manage this.

Action

10. **Fraud Report**
It was noted that there have been no instances of fraud or attempted fraud since the last meeting.

11. **GDPR**
Beth Yap informed the Committee that there has been one subject access request and one low risk data breach since the last meeting. It was noted that the new Data Protection Officer would join the College in April and receive a full handover from Beth.

12. **SRMA**
Claire Mugridge presented the Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment, explaining that all schools are required to submit this to the DfE by 15th March 2022.

In response to a question from the Committee, Claire confirmed that, last year, no College employee's benefits exceeded £100k due to the 8-month, financial year as a result of academisation, and mid-year changes to the Senior Leadership Team.

In response to another question from the Committee, Claire confirmed that the Trust is given the opportunity to change plans for replacing contracts and explained that the Finance & Operations Committee reviewed all contracts over £10k at its last meeting.

The Committee recommended the SMRA to the Board for electronic approval and asked that the Senior Leadership Team consider the process for approving this in the future.

Recommendation/Action

13. AOB
None.

The meeting concluded at 7:40pm