

**NOTES OF THE TWENTY EIGHTH MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 3 MARCH 2021 at 4.30PM.**

The meeting was held remotely by Zoom in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions.

PRESENT:

David Watt	Committee Chair
Kacper Kacica	Committee Member
Michael Payne	Committee Member
Margaret Swiderska	Committee Member
Clare Walker	Committee Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jon Vincent	Principal
Janet Thomson	Vice Principal Resources & College Development
Tracy Elliott	Assistant Principal - Finance & Infrastructure
David Marshall	Assistant Principal- Student Experience to Agenda Item 21.06
David Archibald	Henderson Loggie (Internal Auditors)
Gary Devlin	Azets (External Auditors)
Christine McConnell	Clerk to the Board (Minute Taker)

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| 21.01 | WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
The Committee Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Particular welcome was given to Margaret Swiderska who was attending her first meeting. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair extended his thanks to Keith Rosser who has now moved to Finance and Resources and who has been a valuable member of the Audit Committee. | |
| 21.02 | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
No declarations of interest were received. | |
| 21.03 | MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2020
The Minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. | |
| 21.04 | MATTERS ARISING – ACTION GRID
The Committee noted the updates provided in the Action Grid. | |
| 21.05 | AUDIT COMMITTEE SCHEDULE OF WORK
The Committee noted the Schedule of Work and agreed that it may be helpful to include an occasional “deep dive” on a topic of interest to the Committee. | |

**21.06 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS:
STUDENT SUPPORT**

David Archibald of Henderson Loggie, Internal Auditors, spoke to the report which reviewed the support services available to students concentrating on the role of the Student Advice Centre and the Learning Inclusion Team. The Committee noted that overall it was a very positive review which the auditors had given an overall level of assurance as “Satisfactory”.

The report identified 6 objectives and highlighted a number of strengths and some areas where arrangements could be enhanced.

The Committee noted that there were four recommendations, all graded “Priority 3” which is low priority.

The Committee also discussed the actions from the Student Support Business Process Review which had been completed in May 2018.

D Archibald advised the Committee that he was comfortable and confident as to the work being done to follow up on the areas suggested in this review.

The Committee discussed the grading of the recommendations and noted the challenges which had been faced in ensuring students were able to access online learning. The Committee recognised that this has been a changing environment since the College closure in March 2020 and was content with the gradings.

The Committee agreed that the risks to the students in not being able to access learning need to be balanced against the risks of loss/ damage to equipment.

The Committee discussed the previous Business Process Review and noted the points arising from that review are distinguishable from control weaknesses. It was suggested that they are described as “actions” in any future report to ensure the difference is clear.

The Committee discussed the risk from fee refunds which may arise from students’ dissatisfaction with lack of access to face to face learning and noted that, from a College perspective, this is less than has been reported by Universities in England due to the different fee structure and level of fees paid by students.

The Committee noted the report and recommended that it is shared with Learning and Teaching Committee.

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CMcC

PAYROLL

D Archibald spoke to this review advising that the level of assurance was “Good”. The audit identified several strengths in the payroll processes with no specific control weaknesses. Four opportunities for improvement were identified. The Committee noted that this was a very positive report and that there was a small payroll team. The Committee requested that the wording of recommendation 4 be reviewed and updated to clarify the range of payroll controls which are in place.

DA/TE

The Committee discussed the processes in relation to submission of timesheets and agreed that staff should be aware that this is a compliance requirement which must be accurately and timeously completed.

FRAUD AND BRIBERY PREVENTION, DETECTION AND RESPONSE

D Archibald spoke to this review which had been rated at a “Good” level of assurance meaning that the system meets control objectives.

D Archibald described the process he had undertaken to complete the review advising the Committee that he considered there to be tight controls around procurement processes.

The Committee discussed the two recommendations in the report, noting that anti-fraud and corruption training had been made available to all levels of staff.

The Committee agreed that the Clerk should review the Unethical Behaviour and Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure and should report back to the next Committee.

J Vincent advised the Committee that there is a separate route to deal with any potential allegations of educational fraud from students.

The Committee also noted the threat from third parties and agreed that this Internal Audit Report should be for use within the College only.

CMcC

21.07 INTERNAL AUDIT 2020/21 PLAN PROGRESS

The Chair invited D Archibald to speak to the Report issued with the Agenda.

The Committee noted the position against each of the audit areas and was content with progress.

21.08 COLLEGE STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

J Thomson spoke to the report and advised the Committee that a risk management audit is planned which will report to the next Audit Committee.

The Committee expressed some concern at the number of “red” rated risks on the register.

The Committee noted that the register will be reviewed at the EMT meeting next week when the risks and associated ratings will be considered. The Committee suggested that the register could take account of long term and short term actions and could be updated to include reference to the potential impact of the Scottish Funding Council review.

The Committee also asked that the presentation of the register be considered to ensure it is as accessible as possible given the small printing at the moment.

JV/JT

21.09 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIT ROLLING ACTION PLAN

T Elliott spoke to the rolling action plan and discussed the three partially implemented recommendations.

The Committee noted the challenges in relation to review of HR policies in light of National Bargaining processes and that there is ongoing discussion in relation to establishing a single focal point for internal and external communications. The Committee requested that an update will be provided to the Committee at its next meeting.

JT/TE

In addition there was a recommendation that had been requested to be set aside and it was agreed this would be further considered by management and brought back in the next rolling plan update.

JT/JV

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 26th May 2021 at 4.30pm. Location to be confirmed

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