

**REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2025 10am
Committee Room Reaseheath Hall**

Present: Gary Crowe (independent), chair
Jan Chillery (independent)
Peter Green (independent)
Mike Gorton (independent)

In attendance: Marcus Clinton (principal)
Graeme Lavery (VP finance and resources)
Alex Hire (RSM)
Jackie Schillinger (company secretary and head of governance)

At the start of the meeting members had the opportunity to discuss any matters with the College Auditors without the presence of senior management.

PART A unless stated

| item | Content |
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| 1. | Standing Items |
| 1.1 | Apologies were received and accepted from Ashley Austin and Fran Johnson. The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout. |
| 1.2 | A declaration was noted from Peter Green in relation to an item on the 4Action tracking report, but this did not require the committee member to leave the meeting for that item. |
| 1.3 | RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were approved as a correct record. |
| 1.4 | RSM sector update briefing provided an update on government department changes, the Ofsted consultation, Skills England and the growth and skills levy, RSM emerging risk radar spring 2025. The emerging risk radar would be used at the board strategic risk session in the summer term and several key points were highlighted by the committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging risk with the government spending changes and the macro political environment creating a more challenging fiscal picture. The need to align with the government skills funding priorities of food security, green skills, Agric tech in the emerging industrial strategy. Devolution presents opportunities with more flexibility in adult funding provided the college is strategically involved with the Cheshire and Warrington skills agenda. |
| | Corporation Core Function Accountabilities |
| 2. | Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met. |

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| 2.1 | RESOLVED: Internal Audit FE Sector Benchmarking Report received providing useful contextual information and confirming that the college is not out of line with other similar colleges in terms of internal audit outcomes, management actions and themes. ACTION: 7 themes on this list here that executive could use to review the risk register and in looking at the audit planning. |
| 2.2 | RESOLVED: Internal Audit Plan Progress Report received confirming the work schedule is on track and will be completed this year, as planned. Audit committee input to health and safety audit scope had shaped this and the scope had been refined as a result of the committee's input. For next year's plan it was agreed to have an overarching theme of oversight. This was based on the discussion around whether there had been sufficient oversight and level of assurance for the board in several areas over the past year. It was for the collective board and sub-committees to reflect in the self-assessment in the summer term on this golden thread across the strategic risk areas. It was agreed that the RSM audit this year on health and safety processes include the oversight theme as an example of how this works. |
| 2.3 | RESOLVED: Audit Recommendations Tracking Report was received with substantial assurance that the college continues to make good progress in implementing internal audit recommendations in a timely way. In relation to the outstanding action on the customer relationship management (CRM) system it was agreed that the solution is different to that originally envisaged in the recommendation and therefore RSM will include this in the follow up report this year so that it can be closed down. |
| 2.4 | RESOLVED: Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Processes Audit Report provided substantial assurance on IAG processes, with the committee noting that the Matrix assessment later in the year will provide further third-party assurance and the Pulse survey action will be completed by the end this academic year in Pulse 3. |
| 2.5 | RESOLVED: Framework for Student Engagement and Outcomes Audit Report was received providing substantial assurance. |
| 2.6 | RESOLVED: Public Sector Decarbonisation Grant Scheme Post Completion Audit was received providing substantial assurance on project completion, with a summary of the funded projects and the audit reports that will be provide for assurance on an ongoing basis. |
| 3. | Setting and Communicating the College Strategy and Goals – Strategic Risks |
| 3.1 | <p>Strategic Risk and Irregularities Report: The review of strategic risk considered committee assurance reporting and confirmed the executive risk scoring and assurance level for risks 8 (safeguarding), 9 (health and safety) and 10 (legal and regulatory). Key points raised in discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to safeguarding and health and safety risk, whilst the audit committee receives audit reporting in relation to these risk areas, as the board receives a termly report, the committee considered it is difficult for the audit committee to provide a level of assurance to the Board in relation to these two areas of risk. • The committee agreed to look at providing more guidance on the description of levels of assurance for committees, especially between 'partial' assurance and 'reasonable' assurance, looking at actions, and impact and time frame. It was agreed to look at the strategic risk assurance report to provide more visual trend information such as using an arrow. • On health and safety oversight, the governor link visits aide memoire was intended to support triangulation of what is happening on the ground. The health and safety link governor and Peter Green had completed a number of health and safety themed link |

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| | visits, providing good coverage of curriculum areas, but this still needed to be supported by all governors. The health and safety task and finish group minutes and the updated college health and safety action plan were received. Peter Green commented that he had seen positive change in culture and actions put in place in his visits with some good progress made. It was agreed that a third-party specialist (one or two health and safety managers from industry) would be requested to come in and carry out a check on the health and safety action plan progress before the college breaks up for the summer if possible. The health and safety task and finish group would then meet in the autumn term to close the action plan and also to look at the health and safety manager role, which will be needed from February 2026. |
| 3.2 | RESOLVED: The committee reports assurance levels following review of strategic risk across the committee system: SR1: Financial Management and Targets: Partial Assurance: outside risk appetite tolerance SR2: Financial Sustainability: Partial Assurance: outside risk appetite tolerance SR3: Quality and Student Outcomes: Substantial Assurance: HE and Apprenticeships within risk appetite. Partial Assurance: FE outside risk appetite tolerance SR4: Strategy and Leadership: Partial Assurance: within risk appetite SR5: Curriculum Skills and Stakeholders: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite SR6: Infrastructure and Resources: Partial Assurance: within risk appetite SR7: People: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite SR 8 Safeguarding and Wellbeing: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite SR 9 Health and Safety: Partial Assurance: outside risk appetite tolerance. SR 10 Legal and Regulatory: Substantial Assurance: within risk appetite. |
| 3.3 | RESOLVED: An initial discussion was held on internal audit planning for 2025-26 and emerging sector risks, which will also be covered in a full board session in the summer term on strategic risk, risk appetite and horizon scanning. The audit committee will input into the audit planning meetings this year with management and auditors. |
| 4. | Closing items |
| 4.1 | RESOLVED: The committee recommends the audit tender process be carried out in April/May 2025 as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The college retains a full independent Internal Audit Service • The tendering process for external auditors and internal auditors to be carried out via the Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC) audit tender framework. • The Audit committee assist in the consideration of tenders received and presenting recommendations for decision to the Board at the July 2025 meeting. |
| 4.2 | There was no other business reported to the meeting. |
| 4.3 | RESOLVED: The committee was satisfied that it had met its terms of reference and planned cycle of business for the meeting, with the caveat that it consider adding a separate TOR on risk review and to report to the board asking it to consider the best way for assurance on safeguarding risk and health and safety risk to be reported as these reports are made directly to the board on a termly basis. |
| 4.4 | RESOLVED: The date of next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 10 July at 10am |

The meeting closed at 12.15pm

Confirmed as a correct record 10 July 2025

Gary Crowe (Chair)