

## AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 25 February 2025 at 4.30pm

**Present physically:** J Wakelam, Trustee - **Vice Chair**

**Present virtually:** D Bicker, Trustee R Attwell  
P Frazer-Gale, Committee member R Inman, Trustee - **Chair**

**In attendance:** A Brewster, Group Head of Finance  
A McGarel, CFO  
L Carroll, Group Head of Project Accounting, Risk and Transformation  
K Williamson, Scrutton Bland  
S Gales, Governance Professional  
S Hope, Group Director of Compliance and GDPR

**Apologies:** G Kerkham, Larking Gowen  
N Savvas, CEO  
S Prickett, Group Director Finance & Operations

#### **Absent:**

#### **Action**

#### **1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**

J Wakelam declared her role as a Governor of West Suffolk College, P Frazer-Gale declared his role as a member of West Suffolk College's Audit and Risk Management Committee and R Inman declared his role for Stone King LLP. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies were received from G Kirkham, N Savvas and S Prickett.

#### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024**

The minutes of the meeting on 19 November 2024 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

#### **3. Matters Arising from meeting on 19 November 2024**

Seven of the eight matters arising from the previous meeting were complete and one was noted for implementation in future reports.

#### **4. Risk Management Update**

Members received and considered the proposed new Risk Register which includes **2 red, 14 amber, 6 yellow** risks, with four new risks proposed. L Carroll explained the rationale to the proposed new risks and for the changes to risk names and/or scores.

The Governance Professional confirmed that this aligns to the delegated authority given to this Committee to review and propose the Risk Register to the Corporation.

Members discussed the proposed new risks: three EEGT risks one relating to Empowering Futures, one relating to safeguarding at our specialist SEN schools and one relating to significant quality issues at our specialist SEN schools, and one EEG risk relating to implementing a new finance system.

Members discussed the Finance Committee's discussion of its Risk Register Extract as the rationale for the EEG risk, but considered it to be operational and suitably mitigated, so **rejected** the EEG risk.

Members discussed the rationale for the EEGT risk relating to Empowering Futures and **agreed** that it should be added to the Risk Register but suggested the executive to review the risk rating, mitigations and reputational risk.

Members discussed EEG004 (relating to Ofsted) alongside the proposed new risks relating to safeguarding and significant quality issues at our specialist SEN schools and

L Carroll

L Carroll

<p><b>agreed</b> that they should be added to the Risk Register but suggested these risks names need further review and refinement, and clarify that they are EEGT risks specific to the specialist SEN schools.</p>	
<p>Members discussed EEGT002 (relating to SEND reforms) noting this is an environmental risk, and suggested it be removed.</p>	L Carroll
<p>Members discussed EEG002 (relating to risks of integrating additional schools) and suggested we create an additional risk relating to poor reputation reducing likelihood of additional schools wanting to join the Trust.</p>	L Carroll
<p>Members discussed EEG019 (relating to staff capacity) in relation to supporting improvement at the specialist SEN schools, and suggested we create an additional risk relating to inadequate capacity to implement the improvements needed in an appropriate timeframe.</p>	L Carroll
<p>Members discussed EEG020 (relating to cultural integration) and queried if applies to all schools which joined on 1 September 2024 or not. Members discussed, and D Bicker as chair of the Primary Educational Excellence Committee confirmed, that Exning Primary School has integrated well, the risk primarily relates to the specialist SEN schools. Members suggested the risk name be amended to clarify that this relates to the specialist SEN schools.</p>	L Carroll
<p>Members discussed EEG003 (relating IT security) and considered it to be operational and suitably mitigated, so suggested it be rated green.</p>	L Carroll
<p>Members discussed EEG007 (relating to pay costs) mitigations, and queried how many staff are paid the real living wage. The CFO answered this.</p>	
<p>Members discussed EEG019 (relating to student capacity) and queried whether the new timetable at OSFC has successfully increased capacity. The CFO advised that it has but noted this risk is a Group risk as Exning Primary School and WSC have ongoing student capacity concerns. Members asked the executive to review the risk to see if it is still relevant.</p>	L Carroll
<p><b>5. <u>Audit Recommendations Tracking Report</u></b>  Members received and considered the tracking report which shows that of the 22 ongoing recommendations; 17 will be reviewed by the Follow Up audit in April, and 5 are new recommendations.</p> <p>Members noted the 'other audit recommendations' appendix captures Ofsted's areas for further development from each specialist SEN schools inspection reports and asked for a progress update at the next meeting.</p>	L Carroll
<p><b>6. <u>Internal Auditor's Findings Reports:</u></b></p> <p><b>i. Progress report</b>  Members received and considered the report and K Williamson summarised the planned internal audits.</p> <p><b>ii. Maths and English Education</b>  Members received and considered the report from the internal audit which took place in January 2025, with a grade of <b>significant assurance</b> with two medium and four low risk recommendation, as well as one value added point. K Williamson summarised the report.</p> <p>Members queried the differences between awarding a strong and significant assurance grade. K Williamson explained that for strong assurance there would be fewer recommendations.</p> <p>Members asked that this report be shared with the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee for their review.</p>	L Carroll

Members discussed the recommendation benchmarking and queried whether the amount of recommendations was a concern. K Williamson explained that many of the recommendations relate to OSFC (not Trust-wide) which provided assurance that these were localised issues rather than systemic issues, and the audit team felt assured that the recommendations would be implemented in a timely manner which provided further assurance.

**7. GDPR Update**

Members received and considered the report provided and S Hope summarised the key information including the number, type and cause of data breach; as well as details of the subject-access requests and freedom of information requests received, and the overall staff completion rate of the mandatory data protection training.

S Hope explained the actions underway to improve staff training completion at our specialist SEN schools.

Members queried if any of the data breaches were reported to the Information Commission Officer (ICO). S Hope informed that we consulted with our Data Protection Officer to check, however none met the criteria for escalation to the ICO.

Members queried if there were any trends in the incidents. S Hope to provide this analysis in future reports.

S Hope

**8. Committee membership, skillset and training needs**

Members received and considered the report provided which summarised the membership, experience, skillset and training of the Committee members, and attendance.

The Governance Professional noted that last academic year this Committee had poor attendance however this has been addressed by membership changes (removing members with poor attendance and appointing new members), and that the new members are appropriately skilled.

**9. Incident Management update**

Members received and considered the report provided and L Carroll summarised the key information of the report.

Members discussed a recent incident and commended the pro-active management.

**10. Any Other Business**

**i. Internal Audit standards**

Members discussed the new standards and queried whether these will impact this Committee's remit. The CFO and Governance Professional to review and update.

CFO  
Gov. Prof.

**ii. Further planned developments to the Risk Register**

The Chair informed of further planned developments to the Risk Register which will be presented at the next meeting in June.

The meeting closed at 5.53pm