

AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 24 February 2025 at 4.30pm

Present physically at WSC: J Wakelam, WSC Governor, **Vice Chair**
R Cannon, WSC Governor

Present virtually: J Gazzard, WSC Governor
K Chapman, WSC Governor, **Chair**
M Searcey, WSC Governor
P Frazer-Gale, Committee member
R Hetherington, WSC Governor

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
N Savvas, CEO (part)
S Gales, Governance Professional
S Hope, Group Director Compliance
S Prickett, Group Director Finance & Operations

Apologies: H Nydam, Committee member
S Mason, RSM

Absences:

1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

J Gazzard declared his role as Member, J Wakelam declared her role as a Trustee and P Frazer-Gale declared his role a Committee member of Eastern Education Group Trust. No conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies were accepted from H Nydam and S Mason.

Members introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising from meeting on 18 November 2024

All of the matters arising from the previous meeting were complete.

4. Risk Management Update

Members received and considered the proposed new Risk Register which includes **3 red**, **16 amber**, **5 yellow** risks, with two new proposed risks. L Carroll explained the rationale to the proposed two new risks and for the changes to risk names and/or scores.

N Savvas joined at 4.40pm

Members discussed EEG004 (relating to Ofsted) given the recent Ofsted grading at one of the Trust's schools, and queried if we feel the risk rating adequately reflects the risk and whether the mitigations are sufficient. L Carroll summarised the mitigation actions underway and the planned additional assurances.

Members noted that these mitigations require significant leadership capacity and queried if the Group has sufficient capacity to achieve these mitigations. L Carroll explained this is captured in EEG019 (relating to capacity) and EEG020 (relating to cultural integration), and that these risks are regularly discussed by the senior executive team.

Action

<p>Members noted that our Group wrap-around student support offer is central to our Group strategy and queried if capacity in this area is of particular risk to warrant a stand-alone risk. L Carroll to consider.</p> <p>L Carroll informed of changes to how the executive prepares the Risk Register, e.g. to propose new risks for consideration rather than directly adding them. The Chair sought procedural guidance from the Governance Professional, who confirmed that this aligns to the delegated authority given to this Committee to review and propose the Risk Register to the Corporation.</p>	L Carroll
<p>Members discussed the two proposed new risks - WSC (relating to DfE growth case funding) and EEG (relating to the implementation of the new finance system). Members discussed the rationale for these from the Finance Committee's discussion of its Risk Register Extract. Members agreed to add the WSC risk but considered the EEG risk to be operational and suitably mitigated, so rejected the EEG risk.</p>	L Carroll
<p>5. <u>Audit Recommendations Tracking Report</u></p> <p>Members received and considered the tracking report which shows that of the 29 ongoing recommendations; of which 8 were reviewed as part of the Follow-up Visit 1 audit, 11 were not part of the Follow-up Visit 1 and 6 are new recommendations for 2024/25.</p> <p>Members queried why the medium-risk health and safety recommendations remain ongoing. L Carroll informed that that this recommendation is underway and due to be complete this academic year. L Carroll and S Hope provided assurance that health and safety evidence remains robust and accurate, the recommendation relates to standardising the format of the evidence.</p> <p>Members commended the executive for the significant improvement of timely tracking and implementation of audit recommendations, and thanked staff for their hard work.</p> <p>Members sought the opinion of Scrutton Bland, to check whether they felt there had been significant improvement in this regard or whether there were ongoing concerns. K Williams informed that their relationship with the executive has been strengthened over the last year and is effective.</p>	
<p>6. <u>Internal Auditor's Findings report(s):</u></p> <p>i. Progress report</p> <p>Members received and considered the report and K Williamson summarised the planned internal audits.</p> <p>Members asked that the finding report of the Business Continuity internal audit be presented to this Committee in June 2025.</p> <p>Members discussed the audit universe table, noting that procurement (reviewed in 2022/23) received a grade of reasonable assurance and queried whether it should be reviewed again in 2025/26 given its lower assurance grade and the significant policy/regulatory changes impacting procurement. K Williams with the CFO to consider.</p> <p>ii. Follow-up Visit 1</p> <p>Members received and considered the report from the internal audit which took place in January 2025, with a grade of good progress and K Williamson summarised the report.</p> <p>Members noted the typo on the table heading of page 5 of the report. K Williamson to remove 'superseded' from 'implemented superseded' heading and re-issue.</p> <p>The Chair praised the effective working between the executive and the internal auditors which has resulted in improved timeliness of finalisation of internal audits and of audit recommendation due date/implementation.</p>	<p>K Williamson</p> <p>K Williamson CFO</p> <p>K Williams</p>

iii. Month End Procedures and Controls

Members received and considered the report from the internal audit which took place in January 2025, with a grade of **strong assurance** with one value added point. K Williamson summarised the report.

Members commended the staff for their strong financial controls and procedures.

iv. HE Quality Management

Members received and considered the report from the internal audit which took place in January 2025, with a grade of **significant assurance** with five low risk recommendations. K Williamson summarised the report.

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.

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 those that had not completed GDPR training. S Hope informed there were not, however we continue to work with staff to ensure completion

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 informed that since the paper was circulated Paul Frazer-Gale has been re-appointed for a further term, serving on the Committee.

Members thanked the Governance Professional for her support to the Committee.

9. Incident Management update

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

Members commended the pro-active management and training organised.

10. Any Other Business

- 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.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm