Minutes
GB Audit & Risk Committee
Governance

Date:	20/03/2024		
Time:	4.30 – 6.00pm		
Location:	Online Teams		
Present:	Nasim Khan	(NK)	Chair
	Vincent Neate	(VN)	Vice Chair
	Ketan Sheth	(KSh)	Governor
	Tracy Critchley	(TC)	Staff Governor
	Keith Smith	(KS)	Ex Officio CEO
In attendance:	Dylan McTaggart	(DM)	Deputy CEO, Group Principal
	Shane Woodhatch	(SW)	Chief Finance Officer
	Julie Amory	(JA)	Group Director of People & Organisation Development
	Gavin Hughes	(GH)	Principal – Richmond upon Thames College
Invited speakers:	Anna Beattie	(AB)	Director of Finance
	Karen Elliott	(KE)	Assnt Director of People & Organisation Development
	Kath Rangeley	(KR)	Director - Funding and Information Services
	Anne Haynes	(AH)	MIS Manager (Agency)
	Abiraj Vijaykumar	(AK)	Senior Health and Safety Advisor
	Mark Brough	(MB)	Director of Estates & Facilities
Governance:	Perry Perrott	(PP)	Chief of Staff & Governance
	Rekha Kaul	(RK)	Senior Governance Manager
Apologies:	Simon Boulcott	(SB)	Governor

20th March 2024 A&R ACTION LOG:

No.	Action:	Who:	By When:
1.	Original date and a 'carried forward date' to be clearly labelled on Actions which have been carried forward. This will enable Governors to easily identify and challenge on the problematic Actions which appear to be taking a long time to complete.	Governance	13th June A&R
2.	▪ Governance team to research replacement Risk Register software by June 2024, that follows a matrix approach to scoring the risk (not formulaic). ▪ Governors MN, VN and NK are invited to provide strategic input on the suitability of the Risk Register options being considered, to ensure the new Risk Register is presented in an easy-to-read format for Governors.	Governance	13th June A&R
3.	▪ Current Risks to be transferred into the new Risk Management software during August 2024. ▪ New Risk Register software to be fully operational, with training to be provided to Governors and EMT/SLT during September 2024.	Governance	1st Sept 2024
4.	Additional Lockdown Tests will be conducted in June 2024, to continue to test the efficacy and learn / improve from the findings. The test results will be reported to the September A&R Committee.	SW	Sept 2024 A&R
5.	AH to complete the final 10 actions related to RuTC Funding Assurance (Apprenticeships).	AH	1st July 2024
6.	A decision is awaited from Tenant, to determine whether a formal tender process is required for the large scale HRUC Asset Logging activity, to be completed by the end of this financial year	SW/AB	31st July 2023
7.	The Audit Recommendation Log report to be presented in an easier format for Governors to read and understand, in line with the presentation of the new Risk Register.	Governance /AB	13th June A&R
8.	SW to provide assurance of the Audit budget allocation vs. spend to date for this academic year.	SW	13th June A&R

1.	**Declaration of Recording for Data Protection Purposes:**
	Permission was obtained for the meeting to be recorded for the purposes of minutes.
1.1	**Apologies for absence:**
1.1.1	Apologies were received in advance from SB.
1.1.2	Welcome to Mark Brough, Director of Estates & Facilities.
1.2	**Declarations of Interests and Gifts/Hospitality:**
	No declarations were received from Members or EMT/SLT.
2.0	**Minutes of 22nd November 2023 A&R Committee:**
	NK asked if any members had any amendments or questions arising from the minutes, none were received and under resolution the minutes were **APPROVED**.
2.1	**Action Log from 22nd November 2023 A&R Committee:**
2.1.1	7 out of 9 Actions are completed. PP provided a verbal update on the 3 remaining actions which are in progress.
2.1.2	Policies: ▪ Nisan Sharp, newly appointed HRUC Policies & Procedures Lead starts on 1st April 2024 and will attend future A&R meetings to provide updates on policies. ▪ Full list of HRUC policies and procedures are being organised/assigned a unique number and version control. ▪ HR policies are in a strong position with approximately 90% of policies checked and updated. ▪ HRUC Policies update to be provided at 26th March Corporation.
2.1.3	HR data metrics and H&S Audit: updates are contained within today's pack.
2.1.4	NK thanked all for the work completed. No actions are being carried forward.
ACTION 1:	**Original date and a 'carried forward date' to be clearly labelled on Actions which have been carried forward. This will enable Governors to easily identify and challenge on the problematic Actions which appear to be taking a long time to complete.**
2.1.5	PP provided a high-level summary of the themes which had come out of the Lockdown report: ▪ Differentiated sounder alarm system is now being installed at Hayes and Harrow campuses. ▪ The Lockdown Policy and Procedure have been updated.
3.0	**HRUC Risk Register – Audit & Risk extract:**
3.1	HRUC has made significant progress from an Excel spreadsheet used in previous years, to the introduction of Monday.com risk management system this year, however, it is accepted that there are still challenges with Monday.com as an effective risk register system for HRUC.
3.2	A discussion took place about the effectiveness of Monday.com as HRUC's Risk Register: ▪ Extracts from Monday.com are formulaic. ▪ There are challenges with the terminology such as "likely" which suggests that a risk may happen, although this is nuanced. ▪ The extract reports are large in size and difficult to read, both on screen and in a printed pack. ▪ Balance to be struck between how frequently something may happen vs. how important it is to control the occurrence of the thing. VN provided an example: staff/students may routinely forget to wear their ID badges vs. the importance of ID badges to be warn. ▪ The current extract reports only show the top 10 Risks to Governors. ▪ Any change to the risk rating i.e. promotion or relegation of a Risk, is currently not visible in reports. ▪ Governor Mel Nebhrajani is providing guidance to the Governance team on a risk management replacement solution.
3.3	Governors welcomed the additional assurance of being able to see the full picture, in terms of risks that fall below the top ten risks. A suggestion was made for a drill down into a thematic family of risks about a certain topic e.g. reputation risks or community risks, as part of a rotating programme of topics, throughout the year.

3.4	The Orange Book on the management of risk management, as published by the Government, is being looked at for guidance.
3.5	The ESFA College Financial Handbook for 2024-5 has been published today by the AoC and provides clear guidance on what should be covered for audit and risk matters. PCR 2015 regulations have been replaced with the new financial regulations.
3.6	A DECISION has been taken to phase out and discontinue use of Monday.com by the end of the academic year June 2024.
ACTION 2:	▪ **Governance team to research replacement Risk Register software by June 2024, that follows a matrix approach to scoring the risk (not formulaic).** ▪ **Governors MN, VN and NK are invited to provide strategic input on the suitability of the Risk Register options being considered, to ensure the new Risk Register is presented in an easy-to-read format for Governors.**
ACTION 3	▪ **Current Risks to be transferred into the new Risk Management software during August 2024.** ▪ **New Risk Register software to be fully operational, with training to be provided to Governors and EMT/SLT during September 2024.**
4.0	**Lockdown Tests Report and Lessons Learnt:**
4.0.1	An executive summary and detailed Lockdown Report were provided in the pack and taken as read.
4.0.2	The importance of an effective lockdown system was impressed upon the Committee, by providing examples of what could cause a lockdown (or partial lockdown) to take place: ▪ An intruder with a weapon trying to gain access to a building in order to harm a staff or student ▪ Major road traffic accident resulting in chemical fuel spillage in the immediate vicinity of the college ▪ Out of control dog in the area ▪ Localised incident in any local building close to the college.
4.0.3	Following testing of existing Lockdown preparedness at Uxbridge, Harrow and Richmond campuses, the need to install an integrated system across all sites has been identified.
4.0.4	Following a through Tender process of three companies, Schoolwatch was appointed the award. Subsequent advice / due diligence has been taken on Schoolwatch's CCTV camera systems.
4.0.5	The Schoolwatch system will allows for: ▪ full and partial lockdowns ▪ recorded message alerts both digitally and visually, to alert people travelling between sites ▪ alerts to other campuses of a lockdown at any campus ▪ future linkage to CCTV, facial recognition, AMPR and AI detection.
4.0.6	The Schoolwatch system will cost circa £100,00K and is used by 300 Schools, 30 Colleges and 3 Universities across UK and has been extensively tested as best practice.
4.0.7	The Schoolwatch system will be installed at Hayes, Uxbridge and Harrow in April 2024.
4.0.8	Staff and Students will be trained by May 2024.
ACTION 4:	**Additional Lockdown Tests will be conducted in June 2024, to continue to test the efficacy and learn / improve from the findings. The test results will be reported to the September A&R Committee.**
	The meeting was paused at 5.06pm when NK's connection froze; he was immediately re-connected, and the meeting continued.

5.0	**RuTC Funding Assurance Review - Apprenticeship Audit Report:**
5.0.1	KR provided introductory context: ▪ 2021-22 HCUC National Audit took place, resulting in a number of Apprenticeship actions. ▪ 2022-23 Richmond National Audit took place, resulting in a number of Apprenticeship actions.
5.0.2	Anne Haynes (MIS Manager) was introduced and presented a high-level summary of the detailed 2022-23 EFSA report which had been provided in the pack and is taken as read: ▪ 45 actions were received following the two audits, the majority being related to Apprenticeships ▪ 19 Apprenticeship actions have been resolved ▪ 16 Apprenticeship actions are awaiting testing and AH is confident these will be resolved.
ACTION 5:	**AH to complete the final 10 actions related to RuTC Funding Assurance (Apprenticeships).**
5.03	July 2024 is when the EFSA will commence the National Audit, this is completed annually and encompasses all funding streams. HRUC also runs an Internal Audit programme to provide further ongoing assurance and testing.
5.0.4	Significant improvements have been made to the internal processes and procedures. The lessons learnt are shared across the Group, to mitigate against future issues.
5.0.5	Validera will conduct a Funding Assurance Audit in the October 2024.
5.0.6	The committee thanked AH and KR for good piece of work.
5.0.7	*AH left the meeting at 5.21pm.*
6.0	**GLA Sub-Contracting Controls Report 2022/23:**
6.1.1	KR talked to the highlights of the detailed annual GLA Sub-Contracting Report which had been prepared by KPMG for the last academic year, as was provided within the pack and was taken as read.
6.1.2	An annual sub-contracting Audit relating to GLA AEB (Adult Education Budget) funding is provided for provision higher than £100K: ▪ Three partners: Life Long Learning Centre (LLCC), ATN and Skills Network. ▪ Two recommendations were made in the report: one medium, one low. ▪ Medium recommendation is to do with the College's due diligence checks requiring an overview document and the continued quality checks against the provider. ▪ Low recommendation was to do with the Sub contracting, Funding, Retention and Charging policy to be updated and published on the website. The policy has been presented to the March F&R Committee and is ready for **RATIFICATION** at 26th March Corporation.
6.1.3	The Committee thanked KR for the good piece of work, which has mitigated against a higher number of recommendations being made to the College.
7.0	**Audit Recommendations:**
7.1	**HRUC College Asset Register – update:**
7.1.1	**Audit Recommendations Log:**
7.1.2	An updated Audit Recommendation log has been provided within in the pack.
7.1.3	AB explained that the Auditors report of the External Audit of the Financial Statements, has been amended and re-issued and a copy has been provided at the March F&R Committee.
7.1.4	Members NOTED that the Auditors have re-issued the Auditors report: ▪ The audit report initially stated that the financial statements as 'qualified'. The audit report has now been amended and re-issued to the new wording 'unqualified with the exception of the premerger adjustments posted during the period'. ▪ Initially there were 3 high risk items which has now been downgraded to 1 high risk item (related to the HRUC Fixed Assets Register) and two medium risk items. Auditors were satisfied from minutes of meetings that a Risk Register did exist, and it was a housekeeping matter that HRUC were not able to provide a copy of it. Bank reconciliations were prepared on a monthly basis, for the period prior to the merger with RC.

7.1.5	Auditors have acknowledged, this year was exceptional in terms of the time constraints between the publication of the initial Auditors report and the re-issued Auditors report, which meant Finance department colleagues had limited time to discuss and agree the finalised report, before it was published, as would normally happen in previous years.
7.1.6	*NK's connection froze at 5.30pm and he was immediately re-connected. Members continued with the meeting.*
7.1.7	SW has provided assurance that the Fixed Assets activity is being managed by AB and good progress is being made. NK acknowledged and thanked AB for the update about the Fixed Assets.
ACTION 6:	**A decision is awaited from Tenant, to determine whether a formal tender process is required for the large scale HRUC Asset Logging activity to take place by the end of this financial year:** ▪ Preparation of a physical Assets Inventory of all assets across all three Colleges and five Campuses, including tagging and barcoding of all significant assets. ▪ Reconciliation of the assets vs. the current assets list that the Finance department have currently. ▪ Introduction of a software solution to manage the assets going forward. Demonstrations have taken place on the current assets logging software called FMIS.
ACTION 7:	**The Audit Recommendation Log report to be presented in an easier format for Governors to read and understand, in line with the presentation of the new Risk Register.**
8.0	**Internal Audit Strategy 2023-24 updates:**
8.1	SW talked to the highlights of the Internal Audit Strategy executive summary document and the detailed Internal Audit Summary report, as contained within the pack. The following internal audits are scheduled: ▪ Safeguarding internal audit is scheduled in March 2024 ▪ Validera Auditors: IT data security, systems & processes (GDPR) internal audit in May 2024 ▪ Validera Auditors: Key Financial Controls internal audit in May 2024 ▪ Governance External Board Review (EBR) in May – July 2024 (total of 5 days) ▪ Funding Compliance internal audit in October 2024
8.2	In order to provide ongoing post-merger assurance, SW has talked to JW about the following internal audit to be formally scheduled to take place: ▪ Validera Auditors: Work Experience internal audit in May 2024
8.3	SW reminded the Committee, that Validera are contracted to provided 55 days of expertise work to HRUC for these purposes. There is no obligation to be limited to using Validera to conduct Audits, if there is a better/more specialist organisation who can conduct an Audit e.g. the Safeguarding Audit will be conducted by an Inspector and the Governance EBR review will be conducted by Association of Colleges (AoC).
ACTION 8:	**SW to provide assurance of the Audit budget allocation vs. spend to date for this academic year.**
9.0	**Standing Items:**
9.1	**Mental Health and Well Being report:**
9.1.1	JE talked to the highlights of the health and wellbeing report which encompassed: ▪ Communication ▪ Support services including the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), Plumm (mental health platform) and Mental Health First Aiders ▪ Staff Wellbeing Programme ▪ Staff Survey response ▪ Mental Health training ▪ Mental Health Awareness week (May 2024) ▪ Staff Wellbeing Fair (July 2024) ▪ Staff Wellbeing newsletter

9.1.2	*NK's connection froze at 5.41pm and he was immediately re-connected. Members continued with the meeting and were pleased to note the above positive interventions in place across the campus.*
9.1.3	JA/KE to meet with Plumm to ensure there is sufficient promotion of regular supportive interventions and activities in place for staff affected by current World tensions/distressing images in the news.
9.1.4	HRUC will be championing and fund raising for the Young Minds Charity in 2024-25. PP has contacted the Young Minds Charity to arrange the fundraising paperwork. Young Minds will be providing significant support interventions for young people / students at HRUC.
9.1.5	NK thanked colleagues for the important work being done on mental health.
9.2	**Health and Safety Report:**
9.2.1	The Annual Health & Safety Report for the academic year 2022/2023 showcases the institution's commitment to safety, with all action plan items successfully completed.
9.2.2	AV was welcomed as the Senior Health and Safety Advisor and talked to the highlights of the report, as provided in the pack: ▪ Significant increase in training compliance from 65.1% in 2023 to 81% in 2024. ▪ Rise in incidents is attributed primarily to the inclusion of data from the newly added Richmond campus and the institution's improved incident reporting, follow-up, and monitoring processes, demonstrating a rise in the vigilance and comprehensive approach to incident management. ▪ Proactive stance on health and safety, which is aimed to establish HRUC as a benchmark for safety and preparedness. ▪ Environmental management system ▪ Internal Health & Safety Audit (started 26th February and expected to finish by end May 2024) ▪ First Aid arrangements (72 First Aiders across five campuses) ▪ Log of accidents and incidents ▪ Lockdown drill ▪ Fire Safety & ME&E inspections ▪ Risk assessments
9.2.3	Advanced measures for continuous monitoring to ensure the safety & security of premises is in place: ▪ Comprehensive review and update of health and safety policies, procedures, and informational guides ▪ Identifying and provide additional training on Risk assessment, incident investigation, Fire emergencies, and First Aid across campuses to exceed legal requirements and establish a robust emergency response capability. ▪ Introducing a Health and Safety Feedback Mechanism ▪ Adopting a Behavioural-Based Safety Strategy
9.2.4	There was a discussion about improvements made in the consistency, accuracy and monitoring of H&S matters, in particular at Uxbridge Campus.
9.2.5	NK thanked AV for the comprehensive H&S report.
9.2.6	The Committee was encouraged to see the positive momentum/direction of travel which is clearly being demonstrated on the close monitoring and reporting of H&S this year.
9.3	**Report on fraud/corruption issues:**
	None were reported.
10.0	**Any Other Business (AoB):**
10.1	Governors were politely reminded to complete the two mandatory training courses using the Smartsafe log on: Safeguarding / Prevent and EDI training before the deadline 29th March 2024.
10.2	Reminder to Governors to attend 24th April Governance Conference @ Marriott Hotel, Heathrow.
11.0	**Dates of the next meetings:**
11.1	Thursday 13th June 2024 at 4.30pm - 6.00pm @ online.
11.2	Chair thanked all for a productive A&R Committee meeting.
	Meeting closed: 5.55pm.

SIGNED:

DATE: