

COLCHESTER INSTITUTE CORPORATION
Meeting of the
AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE
held on Thursday 6 March 2025
4.30pm at the Colchester Campus

Members:

Stephanie Bettinson – Committee chair
Simon Attwood - Governor
Varun Verma – Co-opted Governor
Sally Messenger - Governor
Michael Asare Bediako - Governor

In attendance:

Alison Andreas – Principal/CEO
Gary Horne – Deputy Chief Executive
Mark Emerson – Vice Principal
Olufolake Mustafa– TIAA, Internal Audit
Alison Bennett – Head of Governance

MINUTES

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Varun Verma following the meeting.

2. Declaration of any conflicts of interest

No committee or staff member declared any financial or other interest in the business to be discussed.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

3.2 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2024 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

4. Action Sheet and Matters Arising from the Minutes

CIC/AR/25/1/2, ARC Action Log 2024-25, was received and it was noted that there were no outstanding actions.

5. Internal Audit

5.1.

CIC/AR/25/1/4, Summary Internal Controls Assurance (SICA) March 2025, was received and noted. Internal Audit (IA) took the meeting through the progress report.

5.2

CIC/AR/25/1/5, Assurance Review of Learner Experience, was received. It was noted that Substantial assurance audit was received, and actions are underway against the two low level recommendations. The key findings were:

- The Colleges Personal Development Programme is guided by the Ofsted Framework
- Interviews conducted with key members of staff and students found that there were no concerns or complaints with implementing the personal development programmes.

- The student learner survey concluded that 95% of the students concluded that the following topics are covered during the induction: Safeguarding, British Values, Prevent, College Expectations, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, Health and Safety, The College App (CI Connect) and My Career Options.

Governors **ASKED** whether physical evidence is gathered to evidence that a recommendation has been implemented. IA confirmed that it is.

Progress against the annual plan.

- Payroll audit is in the draft report stages.
- Cybersecurity Maturity Assessment is in progress.
- Review of Maths and English to take place during March 2025.

6. Assurance Dashboard incorporating Audit Tracker

CIC/AR/25/1/6, Assurance Dashboard 2024-25, was received and noted.

It was explained that the dashboard includes an overview of outcomes from various assurance reviews including Internal Audit, External Audit and other external providers, including Ofsted and included this year is the Funding Compliance audit carried out by KPMG on behalf of the DFE.

Progress against the recommendations, subject to IA verification:

Room utilisation has one action to compete.

Safeguarding recommendations all complete and will turn green subject to IA verification.

Learner experience actions are underway.

Governors noted that all audit work is due to be completed by the end of July and sought assurance that the College can complete the work by that date. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that there are no concerns on delivering the programme at this juncture.

Governors **ASKED** when planning for the 2025-26 audit plan starts. It was explained that the process will be started in early July, however a rolling plan is in place and includes Procurement and Health and Safety for next year. Governors suggested the potential to include AI with it increasingly becoming a more prominent topic.

7. Risk Management

7.1

CIC/AR/25/1/7, notes of the Risk Committee 26 February 2025, were received and noted. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the make up of the committee is being reviewed and invited the Audit & Risk Committee chair to attend future meetings. A member of the College Leadership and Management Group (CLMG) from the apprenticeship area will also be invited to attend due to it being a more prominent area of risk.

It was highlighted that two areas of risk have been escalated as a direct result of discussion at the Risk Committee meeting. These are Staff Retention and Essex Devolution.

Governors **QUESTIONED** the use of the term 'potential for litigation'. It was explained that this is a broad risk covering a range of areas but senior leaders are aware that there is a need to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities within the Procurement Act 2025. Any failure to comply could result in the potential for challenge.

7.2

CIC/AR/25/1/8, Corporate Risk Register, was received and noted including the review of the highest risks which was discussed at the 26.02.25 meeting of the Corporation Board.

The top risks were reported as being:

Risk 1 - Teaching Staff Recruitment. It is recognised that there is a challenge faced with recruitment of staff in Engineering, English, Maths & Science, where pay is significantly higher in industry. Funding allocations for next year are yet to be determined, as is the uplift for the additional students for the current year, however the College is in a good position in terms of the likely lagged funding allocation for the 2025-26 year. If the College is in a position to increase base line pay in line with previous years, many of the risks will be naturally supported. Until then work will be carried

out on retention, benefits packages, the recruitment process etc. A new People Operations Manager has been recruited and they come to post with a strong background in talent acquisition. The Deputy Chief Executive said that he is positive this will have an immediate impact. Governors **ASKED** if there are any courses that the College may not be able to staff in September 2025. It was explained that there were some courses that didn't run, due to lack of staff and workshop space in September 2024 and leaders are working hard to ensure that does not happen in September 2025. The Principal said this had affected adult learners rather than 16-19 learners and there has been opportunity to meet need in other ways, such as boot camps.

Risk 2 – Failure to provide delivery space for specific subjects. This relates to two new accommodation blocks that will be discussed at the forthcoming meetings of the Finance and Resources Committee and the Board. Governors **ASKED** about contingency arrangements and were assured that if new facilities were not ready on time that alternative interim arrangements would be made.

Risk 3 – Staff Retention. Work on this area is moving ahead and the College continues to review pay and conditions in hard to recruit areas. College Executive (CE) monitor staff turnover data via monthly HR reporting.

Risk 4 – Reduction in FE Adult/ Full Cost Income. Regular monitoring of the in-year enrolment position via the dashboard and updated full cost programme summaries.

8. **Reports under the College's Fraud Policy**

It was noted that there had been no reports of suspected fraudulent or irregular acts under the College's Fraud Policy since the last meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

9. **Data Protection**

CIC/AR/25/1/9, Annual Data Protection Report for the period January – December 2024, was received and noted. Governors **ASKED** whether there is a policy, and process, in place when a breach does take place. Governors were assured that the process is outlined in the Data Protection Policy and is operational.

10. **Health and Safety**

CIC/AR/25/1/10, Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee held on 11 February 2025, were received and noted.

10 departmental audits have been completed out of a scheduled 38, starting in November and aiming to complete in June. Positive outcomes are coming through with 6 holding position at Substantial and 4 raising their grades from last time. Plans for Run, Hide, Tell CIP were discussed at the February meeting of the Board.

Governors **ASKED** why near misses are not being reported/ recorded on the system as that data can be used to prevent future issues. The Deputy Chief Executive assured the committee that this has been recognised by the Health and Safety Committee which has an action to draft a communication to ensure significant near misses are clearly reported.

11. **Policy Review**

The following policies were received for review:

11.1. IT Security Policy

11.2. Data Protection Policy

DECISION:

Data Protection Policy was **APPROVED**.

IT Security Policy was **APPROVED** subject to the following changes:

Password Changes – It was agreed that the Vice Principal would investigate best practice on the requirement for regular password change prompts and the length and complexity of passwords, however Governors were assured that multi-factor authentication in place.

ACTION: Vice Principal to investigate best practice and recommendations around passwords.

Governors felt the policy was unclear on the requirement to monitor the activities of those with admin rights. It was agreed that the Vice Principal would review this.

ACTION: Vice Principal to review the current arrangements in place to monitor the activities of those with admin rights.

12. **Any Other Urgent Business**

None.

13. **Meeting Dates**

The committee noted to the forthcoming meeting dates
Thursday 10 July 2025

All meetings to take place at 4.30pm at the Colchester Campus

PART II – CONFIDENTIAL

Circulation restricted to Members of the Corporation Board and College Executive

: Review of External Auditor Performance Indicators	For information	CIC/AR/24/1/13	GH
: Review of Internal Auditor Performance Indicators	For information	CIC/AR/24/1/14	GH