AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

24 March 2026
16:30 - 18:30
to be held at the Colchester Campus

ATTENDANCE

Present:	Sally Messenger	Governor, Vice-Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
	Simon Attwood	Governor
	Marie-Ann Capps	Governor
	James Day	Governor
In attendance:	Alison Andreas	Principal and Chief Executive and Member
	Mark Emerson	Vice Principal
	Ali Davies	Deputy Principal
	Gary Horne MBE	Deputy Chief Executive
	Alison Bennett	Head of Governance
	Leisyen Cox	Scrutton Bland (Internal Auditors)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Stephanie Bettinson.

The Vice Chair chaired the meeting in the absence of the Committee Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No members or staff declared a financial or other interest in the business to be discussed.

3. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - CIC/AR/26/1/1

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December were deferred, pending review and approval by the Committee Chair

ACTIONS:

- Committee Chair to review and approve minutes of the meeting held on 4 December. minutes to be presented to the June meeting for committee approval following review by the Committee Chair
- Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December to be approved at the June ARC meeting.

5. ACTIONS TRACKER AND MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

1) It was noted that one action remained outstanding for the Committee Chair, and it was agreed that this would be carried forward to the June meeting

2) There were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT:

6.1 INTERNAL AUDIT: PROGRESS AGAINST PLAN - CIC/AR/26/1/2

CIC/AR/26/1/2, Progress against Plan, was presented by Internal Audit.

Three audits have been completed to date. The Committee noted the agreed delay for two scheduled audits due to new system implementation. These delayed audits have been substituted with the Additional Learning Support audit and the High Needs Learner Funding audit, both of which are now underway.

The Committee received the Audit Universe, which outlines the full range of potential audits mapped against those previously undertaken. Audits for the next academic year will be confirmed through audit planning discussions.

Governors ASKED about the audits that had been delayed and whether a revised timescale could be confirmed. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the intention is to bring these to the Autumn Term meeting; however, scheduling will need to be considered within the wider audit plan, taking into account year-end pressures and other operational factors. It was noted that some non-finance audits may be brought forward, subject to discussion and agreement with Internal Audit.

6.2 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

CIC/AR/26/1/3, the Health & Safety Audit Report, was presented to the Committee. The following key points were noted:

- A Reasonable Assurance was assigned.
- The action plan includes two medium-risk recommendations.
- An overall Health & Safety framework is in place.
- Some opportunities for improved efficiency and process enhancement were identified.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that all recommendations have been reviewed with the Head of Health & Safety.

Governors **ASKED** about the remedial measures, their complexity, and whether the May deadline was realistic. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that timely progress is essential. The actions have been broken down into manageable steps for the Head of Health & Safety and other colleagues supporting the work. The Committee was assured that an update on progress will be provided at a future meeting.

Governors **ASKED** whether the audit assessed compliance against college policies and procedures or statutory responsibilities. It was confirmed that the audit was conducted against college policy and that there were no breaches of statutory requirements.

CIC/AR/26/1/3, the HR Sickness Absence Management Audit Report, was also presented to the Committee. It was reported that:

- A Substantial Assurance rating was assigned.
- There is one medium-risk and two low-risk recommendations.
- Processes for reporting sickness absence are established and operating effectively.
- A new HR system is scheduled for implementation in June 2026.

The Deputy Chief Executive assured the Committee that all three recommendations are expected to be completed by the end of March and will be reflected in the next assurance dashboard.

7. ASSURANCE DASHBOARD INCORPORATING AUDIT TRACKER - CIC/AR/26/1/5

CIC/AR/26/1/5, Assurance Dashboard incorporating Audit Tracker, was reviewed.

The Committee were assured that the level of audit and assurance coverage undertaken during the year is sufficient to inform an overall opinion at the close of the year on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls

The College has performed well so far during 2025-26 with 2 out of 3 reviews being reported as substantial assurance.

Good progress has been made on implementing prior year recommendations

Whilst progress has been made, actions remain on the Governance Review report delivered in 2023-24

The Vice Principal reported that the College remains confident that it will regain Cyber Essentials accreditation. The College is currently undergoing the Cyber Essentials Plus assessment with the intention of securing Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.

All recommendations for 2024–25 have been completed.

Four audits are scheduled for July.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT:

8.1 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER - CIC/AR/26/1/6

CIC/AR/26/1/6, Corporate Risk Register, was reviewed by the Committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that following discussion at the March meeting of the Corporation Board and recommendation from internal audit, regarding each committee's taking responsibility for their relevant risks a review of committee capacity will need to take place and whether these discussions are already taking place but without the header of risk.

Governor **ASKED** whether the risk register can be added to the Board Portal. Confirmed it can but would need to be recognised that live documents cannot be added and therefore it would have to be a snapshot in time. Suggested it could be the version put to the ARC meetings.

8.2 RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE NOTES - CIC/AR/26/1/7

CIC/AR/26/1/7, Risk Management Committee Notes, was reviewed by the Committee.

The Risk Committee has identified two new risks: the efficiency of Additional Learning Support (ALS) in meeting learner need, and the potential loss of buildings. It was noted that three buildings on the College site are no longer cost-effective to refurbish and are not in a condition to support outstanding teaching and learning. The DfE has been informed of these concerns and the urgency for suitable accommodation.

It is expected that the outcome of the Capacity Funding bid will be received next month.

Governors **ASKED** about plans to address increasing Learner numbers. It was explained that the College is working in partnership with the developer, Latimer, to establish a new college site within their recently approved development. In addition, two expansion projects are currently underway.

Governors raised the risk relating to apprenticeship income. The Deputy Principal assured the Committee that the apprenticeship team are working to mitigate risk.

The Committee Vice Chair emphasised the importance of ensuring clarity regarding the relationship and reporting lines between the Risk Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee.

ACTIONS:

- Risk Register to be added to Board Portal post ARC meetings

8.3 REPORTS UNDER THE COLLEGE FRAUD POLICY

It was noted that there have been no reports of suspected fraud or irregularity under the College's Fraud Policy since the last update.

9. HEALTH AND SAFETY - CIC/AR/26/1/8

CIC/AR/26/1/8, Health and Safety Committee minutes, was reviewed by the Committee.

Governors **ASKED** whether the issue relating to the shortage of suitable rooms for student disciplinary meetings had been resolved. The Deputy Principal reported that this has been incorporated into the planned summer works, which will include the creation of a private yet visible space within the reception area to provide a safe environment for staff to conduct potentially challenging meetings.

10. AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE REVIEW OF COMPLIANCE - CIC/AR/26/1/9

CIC/AR/26/1/9, Audit & Risk Committee Review of Compliance, was reviewed by the Committee.

3.6 - following discussion it was agreed that all areas are compliant.

ACTION: Head of Governance to amend 3.6 to reflect all areas are compliant.

11. DATA PROTECTION/ FOI ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - CIC/AR/26/1/10

CIC/AR/26/1/10, Data Protection/ FOI Annual Report 2025, was reviewed by the Committee.

Governors **ASKED** why the GDPR training target is set at 95%. It was explained that this target allows for normal staff turnover and the arrival of new starters, who are expected to complete the training within their first two weeks in post. The target also takes account of staff on maternity leave or long-term sickness absence.

Governors noted the low number of reported breaches and commented that this reflects a strong understanding of GDPR requirements among staff.

12. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OFS) EMERGING SECTOR RISKS - CIC/AR/26/1/11

CIC/AR/26/1/11, Office For Students (OFS) Emerging Sector Risks.

This item had not been provided by the Committee Chair ahead of the meeting. It was therefore agreed to be carried over to June meeting.

ACTION: Committee Chair to provide report on Office For Students (OFS) Emerging Sector Risks for inclusion on the June agenda

13. POLICY REVIEW

13.1 DATA PROTECTION POLICY - CIC/AR/26/1/12

Governors sought clarification on whether the College is able to determine what it classifies as personal and special category data. It was confirmed that this was considered in 2018 as part of the College's GDPR implementation. The Committee noted that the classifications provide guidance rather than a definitive list.

DECISION: The Committee **APPROVED** the Data Protection Policy.

13.2 IT SECURITY POLICY - CIC/AR/26/1/13

DECISION: The Committee **APPROVED** the IT Security Policy.

14. REVIEW OF MEETING

The Committee agreed that the following would be recommended to the Board:

- Corporate Risk Register

The Committee agreed no items would be recorded as confidential.

15. MEETING DATES:

The Committee noted the upcoming scheduled meetings:
16 June 2026
1 December 2026
11 March 2027
17 June 2027

All meetings to take place at 4:30pm at the Colchester Campus