

AQUINAS COLLEGE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Meeting: 3 June 2024

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mrs H Dove, Mr A Martin, and Mr A Anwar.

Mr A Martin in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr M Benson and Mrs N Tucker

Murray Smith LLP

Mr N Clark

Wylie and Bisset

Mr D Pearson

Principal (Item 6)

Mrs D Blackburn

Assistant Principal (Finance)

Mr T Conlon

Clerk to the Governing Body

1. OPENING PRAYER

The meeting began with a prayer led by Mr Martin.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Ms M Garratt and Mrs J Miller.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

4. COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2024, copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Mrs Blackburn left the meeting at this point.

6. AUDIT REVIEW

The Chairperson asked the Auditors if there were any areas of concern in the college that they wished to raise with the Audit Committee. Murray Smith advised Members that last year's audit had

run efficiently and that Mrs Blackburn had all the information ready for the audits, they have a good dialogue over the planning and timing of the audits and that she is proactive. Wylie and Bisset echoed the comments of Murray Smith and added that they have good working relationship with the college.

Mr Pearson advised members that Mrs Blackburn was well respected within the sector and is involved in a number of working groups with the DfE, ESFA and networking with other colleges. She is also involved in wider aspects of the college. She had taken on additional work as a result of the college moving back into the public sector and the new capital build.

The Committee and Mr Pearson acknowledged the professionalism and hard work of Mrs Blackburn and they recorded their appreciation of the work that Mrs Blackburn does across the college.

Mr Pearson thanked the Auditors for their positive comments.

Mrs Blackburn rejoined the meeting and Mr Pearson left the meeting at this point.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Wylie and Bisset reported that all the audits had been carried out, everything went smoothly and that they had completed their work in accordance with the Audit Plan for 2023/2024.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report be received.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Wylie and Bisset outlined their approach to internal audit and the format of their reports. The grading would be based on recommendations contained in the report. In addition, they would highlight areas of good practice at the college along with benchmarking amongst their clients.

A discussion took place on the internal audit report that had been prepared by Wylie and Bisset on:

a) Capital Funding

Strong Assurance
There were no recommendations

The object of the audit was to ensure i) The funds are being correctly utilised by the college, ii) The college are monitoring and reporting spend to ensure it is being utilised in line with the grant award, iii) The reporting requirements are being adhered to and iv) the reports provided in relation to the funding contain accurate information.

There were no recommendations in the report and 13 areas of good practice were identified. The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been bench marked against.

b) Learner Numbers

Strong Assurance
There were no recommendations

The object of the audit was to ensure i) That the college is collecting and recording data in accordance with the ILR Specifications for 2023/2024, ii) Core data is collected and accurately entered on the college's student records system and iii) The risks identified from Wylie Bisset's (WBg) undertaking of the ESFA funding assurance reviews for 2022/2023 are not being replicated by the college.

There were no recommendations in the report and 17 areas of good practice were identified. The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been bench marked against.

c) Follow Up Review

Strong Assurance

The object of the audit was to ensure i) that the college has appropriately implemented any outstanding internal audit recommendations made in previous years. Two out of the three recommendations had been implemented fully and one superseded.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT

Wylie and Bisset introduced a report, that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, which gave details of the use of audit resources, the outcome of work completed to date and incorporated cumulative data in support of internal audit performance. Progress against the Operational Plan was noted and that all the planned work had been carried out. There had been no changes to the agreed audit plan. A summary of the work undertaken in 2023/2024, the levels of assurance given and the number of recommendations made was included in the report. There were 3 recommendations all of which were classed as low risk. Wylie and Bisset advised members that they had not seen a full set of strong assurance from other audits that they had undertaken in the sector.

The college has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against.

The overall opinion is that the college has adequate and effective risk management, control and governance processes to manage its achievement of the college's objectives and that the college has proper arrangements to promote and secure value for money.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Annual Report be received.

10. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2024/2025

Wylie and Bisset introduced a report, that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, which gave details of the areas to be covered in 2024/2025. The areas were as follows:

Cyber Security Committee	4 Days	Report to February 2025 Audit
Staff Recruitment and Retention	3 Days	Report to February 2025 Audit Committee
Budget and Financial Reporting	3 Days	Report to June 2025 Audit Committee
Learner Numbers	3 Days	Report to June 2025 Audit Committee
Follow Up Review	2 Days	Report to June 2025 Audit Committee
Audit Management	<u>3 Days</u>	
Total	18 <u>Days</u>	

RESOLVED: That the Audit Plan for 2024/2025 be agreed.

11. ACTION ON INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Mrs Blackburn introduced a paper that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The paper summarised the action taken by the college on internal audit findings from 2023/2024 audits. All recommendations had been implemented.

12. POST 16 - AUDIT CODE OF PRACTICE

Mrs Blackburn advised members that there had been very little change to the Audit Code of Practice and that it would have little impact on the college. This was confirmed by Murray Smith.

13. DRAFT AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2024

Murray Smith LLP submitted the Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ended 31 July 2024. The Audit Strategy Memorandum sets out the audit plan in respect of the statutory audit for the College for the year ending 31 July 2024. The memorandum contained the following:

- a) the Scope of Engagement for the audit of Financial Statements, Reporting on Regularity and audit of Teachers Pension Agency Return (“TPA return”) for the year ending 31 July 2024
- b) Respective responsibilities
- c) Independence
- d) Audit Approach
- e) Significant Risks and Key Judgement areas
- f) Other communication requirements
- g) Audit time line.

The audit fees for the year ending 31 July 2024 will increase by 2% to £11,700 excluding VAT.

Murray Smith reported that some of the work on the ILR would be brought forward to the summer term 2024. Work on the Teacher’s Pension Scheme had been completed and returned by 31 May 2024.

Mr Martin asked if Bury Metropolitan Borough Council still provided a payroll service to the college. Mrs Blackburn confirmed that this was still the case and that they provide the payroll services to a number of colleges.

14. FEEDBACK ON ACTIONS FROM RISK REGISTER FOR JUNE 2024

Mrs Blackburn introduced a paper that had been circulated prior to the meeting that provided Members with a brief overview on risk areas which are a focus for the current half term. The areas were as follows:

- i) Covid Pandemic – This will be removed when the register is next updated.
- ii) ESFA funding
- iii) Drop in ESFA 19+ funding and rise in fee charges
- iv) High level ALS
- v) Level 3 Reform
- vi) The college overspends its revenue
- vii) Recruitment of students
- viii) Failure to maintain the reputation of the college
- ix) Inability to recruit and retain key staff
- x) Student Issues – attendance, progression and drop out is not acceptable and fails to achieve targets set.
- xi) The college fails to maintain a high standing in national performance tables
- ix) Inspection announced at short notice for Denominational Inspection.

x) Use of building reaches capacity and college cannot afford replacement build.

Mrs Blackburn added that Covid Pandemic will be removed from the next Risk Register.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

15. POLICY REVIEWS

The following policies had been reviewed by members of the Audit Committee:

a) Anti Bribery b) Fraud and Corruption c) Hospitality and Gifts d) Whistleblowing

RESOLVED: That the above policies as amended be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

16. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

Members discussed whether or not the Internal and External Auditors had met the targets on the Performance Indicators form, which had been circulated before the meeting. It was agreed that both the Internal and External Auditors had met the targets.

17. FRAUD LOG BOOK/WHISTLEBLOWING

Mrs Blackburn advised Members that there were no incidents of fraud, corruption or whistleblowing to report.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Wylie Bisset

Mr Clark from Wylie Bisset advised members that from 3 June 2024 they had consolidated and rebranded to become Wbg, which will become the trading brand of Wbg Services LLP and Wbg Audit Limited.

This strategic move of consolidating and rebranding comes as part of their ongoing commitment to provide the college with the highest quality of service and expertise. It is designed to serve the college's needs more efficiently and effectively; create a seamless experience across all our offices and services; and ultimately, deliver greater value to the college.

An email confirming the change will be sent to the college. This change will not have any impact on the service provided to the college.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 4 November 2024 at 4.30pm, subject to the Calendar of Meetings being agreed by the Governing Body at its meeting on 25 June 2024.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____