AQUINAS COLLEGE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Date: 9 February 2026
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mrs H Dove, Ms M Garratt, Mr A Martin and Mrs T Ryan.

Mr A Martin in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms S Archibald	Wbg Services LLP
Ms N Tucker	Murray Smith LLP
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. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mrs Theresa Ryan has been appointed to the Committee. Mr Anwar has indicated that he cannot continue as a co-opted member of the Committee due to the fact that his family is leaving the area. Mrs Blackburn advised members that she had contacted Lloyd's Bank to see if they had anyone who may be interested in joining the Committee but had not yet heard back from them. Both auditors were asked if they knew of anyone who may be interested in joining the Committee. They undertook to get back to Mrs Blackburn.

3. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs Ryan and Ms S Archibald (Wbg) to their first meeting of the Committee.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all members were present.

5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members 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.

6. COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

7. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not covered by the agenda.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Wbg Services LLP reported that the two audits that had been carried out went smoothly and that everything was on target to complete their work in accordance with the Audit Plan for 2025/2026. Three more reports would be submitted to the June 2026 meeting of the committee a) Safeguarding, b) Learner Numbers and c) Follow Up Review.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report be received.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Wylie and Bissett outlined their approach to internal audit and the format of their reports. The grading is based on the number of audit recommendations contained in the report. In addition areas of good practice at the college are highlighted along with benchmarking amongst their clients.

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

a) Risk Management — Substantial Assurance
One Medium and Four Low Recommendations

The purpose of the review was to assess whether the college had appropriate risk management arrangements in place and that these have been embedded throughout the whole college. The review looked to provide assurance to the Audit Committee that that the college's risk management arrangements were adequate

There was one Medium and four Low recommendations in the report and 5 areas of good practice were identified. The average across the sector is 1 Medium and 2 Low recommendation.

i) That the format of the Risk Register is reviewed to ensure a consistent approach to capturing risks. It is also recommended that an inherent risk score is included for all risks and that risks are identified as strategic or operational. (Medium recommendation)

ii) That the college identify a formal risk appetite. This should be categorised by risk types. Thereafter formal training should be provided surrounding the risk appetite. (Low recommendation)

iii) That management implement regular risk management training for all risk owners and maintain a record of completion of this training. (Low recommendation)

iv) That a structured process for identifying new risks is created. (Low recommendation)

v) That the Risk Management Policy is updated to include the areas identified in the findings. (Low recommendation)

Taking account of the issues identified in the report the Governing Body can take substantial assurance surrounding the policies and procedures in place at the college in relation to Risk Management.

b) Payroll — Strong Assurance
One Low Recommendation

The review looked at the payroll system at the college to assess whether this was operating as expected and that appropriate controls exist. An assessment on whether the payments calculated by the system were accurate and based on bona fide hours worked and that all deductions and additions to salaries were considered to assess whether these were correctly calculated and properly authorised.

There was one Low recommendation in the report and 5 areas of good practice were identified. The average across the sector is 1 Medium and 2 Low recommendations.

i) Where staff request changes to their bank details that college reiterates the process to staff and introduce a checking procedure once forms are provided to HR to confirm that the appropriate information is populated. (Low recommendation).

Taking account of the issues identified in the report the Governing Body can take strong assurance over the college's Payroll system.

Mr Martin asked how were invigilators paid. Mrs Blackburn replies that they are on a casual contract and submit a timesheet for the hours worked.

10. ACTION ON INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Mrs Blackburn introduced a report that had been circulated to members prior to the meeting that showed actions from previous internal audit reports had been implemented.

11. FEEDBACK ON RISK REGISTER AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Mrs Blackburn introduced a report that had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting. It gave members a brief overview of risk areas which are a focus for the Spring Term. The full Risk Register and Policy are submitted to the Autumn Term Governing Body. The current key areas included the following:

i) Funding from the DfE
ii) Drop in GCMA funding and rise in fees charges for Adult Centre.
iii) High Level ALS
iv) Level 3 Reforms
v) The college overspends its revenue
vi) Recruitment of students
vii) Failure to maintain the reputation of the college
viii) Student issues – Student attendance, progression and drop out is not acceptable and fails to achieve targets set.
ix) The college fails to maintain a high standing in national performance tables
x) Inspection announced at short notice
xi) Use of building reaches capacity and college cannot afford replacement build

The report also gave a list of all the Key Risks included in the Risk Register.

Mrs Blackburn advised members that details of the college funding for 2026/2027 should be known later this month. The uncertainty about the continuation of the additional elements of funding outside the per student allocation is always a risk. These additions are worth about £500,000 to the college.

Mrs Blackburn advised members that for the next meeting of the committee there would be an item on the agenda to look at policy changes and the college's appetite to risk.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

12. FRAUD LOG BOOK/WHISTLE BLOWING

Mrs Blackburn advised members that there were no incidents of fraud, corruption or whistle blowing to report.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that Ms J Dommett (Principal) be invited to attend the next meeting that would be held on 8 June 2026 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson