

**Non-Confidential Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting  
held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 3:00pm by Virtual Attendance**

<b>Corporation Members</b>	<b>Appointed as</b>	<b>Chair/Vice</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
Chris Henson	Independent Member	Chair	
David Richardson	Independent Member		(until 5:59pm)
Ian Watson	Independent Member		
VACANT	Independent Member		
Kate Harding	Co-Opted		
<b>In Attendance</b>			
Sallyanne Pearson	Director of Governance		<b>DG</b>
Stephen Kelly	Chief Financial Officer		<b>CFO</b>
Kate Calvert	Chief People Officer		<b>CPO</b>
Helen Wooldridge	Vice Principal Growth, Planning and Performance		<b>VPGPP</b>
Richard Lewis	RSM (External Auditor)		(until 4:56pm) <b>RSM</b>
Conor McGinley	Wbg (Internal Auditor)		<b>WBG</b>
Rachel Robson	External Board Reviewer (Stone King Solicitors)		(until 4:47pm) <b>RR</b>

**(2025/26/A2)**

**1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees, including Rachel Robson, who was present as an observer in her capacity as External Board Reviewer. No apologies for absence were received; all Committee Members were in attendance. Apologies were noted from Danny Metters, Principal and Chief Executive.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

**2.1 Consider and declare, as required, amendments to the Register of Interest**

*(the Register of Interest: Corporation Members, Executive and Director of Governance, was included in the Meeting Pack)*

None raised

**2.2 Consider and declare conflicts of interest to items arising as part of the evening's business**

- Agenda Item 5: Ian Watson : Internal Audit for Residential Accommodation
- Agenda Item 15: Richard Lewis (RSM) Re-Tendering Specifications for the External Auditing Service *(current External Auditor)*

**3 Minutes and Actions Arising**

*(All minutes detailed and the ancillary action summaries were included in the Non-Confidential or Restricted Confidential Meeting Pack)*

**3.1 Minutes**

Minutes arising from the Audit Committee Meeting held on 2 October 2025:

- Non-Confidential: the Minutes were **approved** as a true and accurate record of the Meeting
- Confidential: the Minutes were **approved** as a true and accurate record of the Meeting
- Restricted Confidential: provided as part of the Restricted Confidential Meeting Pack but taken as read and were **approved** as a true and accurate record of the Meeting

**3.2 Action Summary**

*Item not taken*

**Action: DG to add Action Summary from the Committee Meeting held on 2 October 2025 on next Agenda**

**4 DFE Letter re College Financial Forecasting Return 2025 to 2027 and Governor Dashboard**

*(The DFE College Financial Forecasting Return 2025 to 2027 Letter to the College was included in the Meeting Pack)*

The Committee were asked to consider the Department for Education's (DfE's) Letter regarding the College Financial Forecasting Return 2025/27 and Governor Dashboard.

The CFO advised that annual College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) Letter had detailed the following points:

- the commentary does not sufficiently explain the decline in FY2025 performance compared to budget; and
- the commentary does not fully explain the College’s forecast and key assumptions for FY2026 and FY2027.

The CFO reported that the commentary accompanying the CFFR aligned with previous ones submitted but added that the deficit and recent changes at DfE could have prompted the comments. The CFO confirmed the DfE had not requested any additional narrative; noting this would be discussed at a meeting with the DfE on Thursday and future requirements clarified. **A Governor asked RSM whether the observations made by the DfE were unusual or cause for concern.** RSM confirmed the feedback was not unusual but emphasised the Committee itself needed to be satisfied with the level of detail provided. RSM highlighted the area for improvement seemed to be in the commentary for the FY2025 decline and advised it be explored in the DfE meeting as suggested to seek guidance whether more detail is required in future forecasts. The Committee acknowledged the correspondence received; noting it looked forward to receiving an update following the discussions with the DfE.

**ACTION: CFO to provide an update after the DfE meeting on its requirements for the level of detail in the narrative accompanying the CFFR.**

## 5 Internal Auditors

*(The Cyber Security and the Residential Accommodation Internal Audits were included in the Meeting Pack)*

### 5.1 Internal audit assignments

The Committee was asked to consider and advise the Corporation on the following internal audit assignments:

- (a) Residential Accommodation  
Wbg provided an overview of the outcome of the Internal Audit Report.
- |                            |         |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Overall Conclusion:        | Strong  |
| Recommendations & Grading: | 2 x Low |
| Areas of Good Practice:    | 6       |
| Observations:              | 1       |

Wbg outlined the recommendations detailed and drew the Committee’s attention to their Observations.

**A Governor asked the CPO to confirm that recommendations raised had been addressed operationally.** The CPO confirmed the recommendations would be implemented. The CPO added that, in relation to the unsigned contract for the commercial use of residential accommodation, the external party had a long-standing relationship with the College but confirmed measures would be introduced to ensure all contracts were signed going forward.

- (b) Cyber Security  
Wbg provided an overview of the outcome of the Internal Audit Report.
- |                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Overall Conclusion:        | Substantial |
| Recommendations & Grading: | 2 x Medium  |
| Areas of Good Practice:    | 12          |
| Observations:              | 2           |

Wbg outlined the recommendations detailed and drew the Committee’s attention to their Observations.

**A Governor referred to Objective 8 in the Executive Summary: “There are appropriate processes in place for vetting suppliers and assessing the adequacy of their cyber security controls” and asked how far supplier vetting extended and whether it only applied to IT providers or to the wider College supply chain.** WBG confirmed that checks would be required for any supplier with access to College information or systems. For example, where a supplier provides DBS checks, the College must ensure that submission processes and data handling arrangements are compliant. It was clarified that this applies not only to IT-specific suppliers but to the IT elements of all suppliers.

A Governor then queried the March 2026 completion date for implementing staff phishing simulations, given the high-risk profile and asked whether this could be introduced sooner. The CPO confirmed the simulations would be delivered in-house - which provided flexibility to accelerate implementation. March 2026 was noted as the formal completion date however enquiries will be made to bring this forward.

**ACTION: CPO to explore the feasibility of implementing staff phishing simulations as soon as possible.**

A Governor referred to Observation 2, noting only 82% of staff had completed the mandatory cyber awareness training and asked whether this had since improved. The CPO confirmed that compliance with all statutory and mandatory training is actively monitored and followed up but agreed to provide clarification.

**ACTION: CPO to update the Committee on whether the completion rate for the mandatory cyber awareness training module has increased for all staff.**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to update the Corporation on the outcomes of the Internal Audit Reports.

## 5.2 Works of the Internal Auditors

*(The Internal Audit 2025/26 Progress Report November 2025 was included in the Meeting Pack)*

A summary overview was provided. The item was taken as read and the Committee noted the update to the Internal Audit Programme.

## 6 DfE Funding Assurance Review

*(The DfE Funding Assurance Review was included in the Meeting Pack)*

The VPGPP reported that the College had been subject to a DfE Funding Assurance Audit; reviewing compliance for study programmes for young people, the Adult Skills Fund and apprenticeships - covering a total allocation of circa £17 million. The final report has confirmed funding errors of circa £12,000 (0.06% of the allocation), significantly below the DfE's 5% tolerance threshold. The VPGPP explained the Executive Team considered the outcome positive and RSM provided positive feedback, noting the College compared favourably with similar institutions.

The VPGPP outlined the following:

- several recommendations had been made to strengthen processes, particularly for apprenticeships. The VPGPP explained the College had already appointed - prior to the Funding Assurance Audit Report - a new Apprenticeships Operations Manager and a MIS Funding and Data Manager (with apprenticeship expertise) to lead improvements in processes and documentation
- an isolated issue had been identified in the Adult Skills Fund for one student who was affected by changes in funding rules between years. This has now been resolved
- an isolated issue had been identified in T Levels; resulting in a clawback but was limited to one student.

The VPGPP confirmed all recommendations would be implemented and the auditor's feedback had been highly complementary.

The Committee **received** the report and commentary provided; noting positively the limited clawback and strong of compliance.

## 7 Annual Report of the Audit Committee

*(The Annual Report of the Audit Committee was included in the Meeting Pack)*

The Committee were asked to review the draft Annual Report of Audit Committee in readiness for finalisation and presentation to the Corporation. The DG presented the updated Annual Report, noting a revised version had been circulated the previous day following review and receipt of the draft financial statements (recorded as *Tabled Item 1*). Changes made had been highlighted for ease of reference.

Key points raised, included:

- updates to Section 11 to reflect the conclusions, findings and recommendations from the DfE Funding Assurance Review, as well as details of an internal investigation and a whistleblowing incident addressed during the year

- amendments to the appointment and reappointment of the College's Auditors, as highlighted by RSM prior to the meeting
- the inclusion of all internal audits undertaken during the year, associated recommendations and a comparative analysis with previous years - confirming no high-risk recommendations and a slight increase in low-risk recommendations
- integration of key points from the External Auditors' draft Management Letter and Financial Statements, noting these remain subject to change until finalised.
- updated conclusions and recommendations for submission to the Corporation following receipt of all draft documentation.

The DG emphasised the Annual Report provided the Audit Committee's objective assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal controls; confirming the External Auditors' final conclusion would be added once confirmed. Governors were asked to review the highlighted sections, in particular, and confirm they were satisfied with the content, recommendations and conclusions - subject to any final amendments prior to submission to the Corporation.

The Committee confirmed its **APPROVAL** of the Annual Report and detail provided therein.

Discussion was undertaken between Committee Members. **A Governor noted greater assurance and clarity of direction than in previous years.** RSM highlighted the Committee's positive progress, noting the Annual Report included a trend table showing improvements in control recommendations over recent years, reflecting good practice. RSM also reflected on positive assurance from both internal auditors and the DfE - including the recent Funding Assurance Review adding that the Annual Report demonstrated how the Committee's work had evolved and strengthened over time, with assurance from multiple sources. RSM concluded that the Annual Report detailed a comprehensive and transparent view of governance, risk management and internal controls.

The Committee **RESOLVED** that it was satisfied with the content and form of the Annual Report of the Audit Committee; confirming its conclusion of an adequate and effective control framework (subject to any further amendments arising).

**ACTION: DG to finalise the Annual Report of the Audit Committee for submission to the Corporation**

The Chair stressed that the key factor when issues or areas for improvement are identified - whether by the Committee, external auditors, or other reviewers - is the quality of the response. The Chair noted that responses to date had been pragmatic and structured, demonstrating accountability and timely resolution and confirmed this positive approach would be reflected to the Corporation.

## **8 Financial Statement Auditors**

### **8.1 Draft Regularity Audit Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

*(The Regularity self-assessment questionnaire (2024 to 2025) was included in the Meeting Pack)*

*Item taken out of order*

### **8.2 Draft Members' Report and Financial Statements including the Regularity Audit**

*(The Report for Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025 was included in the Meeting Pack)*

RSM presented an overview of the financial statements from an audit perspective, focusing on areas of particular relevance to the Committee, including governance, internal control and compliance. Key sections outlined included:

- results, cash flows, and reserves policy
- student numbers, growth and achievement
- sustainability and property matters
- changes in funding arrangements and key financial risks
- **Going Concern assessment (page 13):**- RSM confirmed that loan covenant compliance had now been resolved and based on a forward-looking assessment there was no evidence of any breaches for the next two years (to July 2027). RSM confirmed the College was a going concern for the period assessed.
- **Statement on Corporate Governance and Internal Control (pages 26-27):** RSM noted the Committee's opinion that, based on audit work and reports received during the year, governance, risk management and internal controls were adequate and effective, with no fundamental matters arising. RSM invited the Committee to confirm agreement with the statements on pages 26 and 27, which

conclude that the Corporation had fulfilled its statutory responsibilities for governance, solvency, safeguarding public funds and the efficient use of resources.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to confirm its agreement to the Statement.

- **Regularity Statement of Compliance (Page 28):** the Auditor confirmed there were no matters which needed to be brought to the DfE's attention and confirmed its agreement to the statement confirming no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or non-compliance had been found.
- **Audit Opinion (Page 30):** RSM confirmed its unmodified opinion; noting the financial statements present a true and fair view and reporting that previous uncertainty regarding going concern and loan covenant compliance had been resolved. RSM added that based on the October Management accounts and forward-looking assessments, there was also no evidence of covenant breaches for the next two years (to July 2027). However, RSM reminded the Committee that the Corporation must advise the RSM of any changes before signing the accounts in December.
- **Performance and Financial Position:** an operating surplus of £272,000 before pension adjustments was reported. Pension-related movements were explained to have resulted in an accounting swing of £1.1 million, which RSM clarified as a non-cash actuarial adjustment. The year-end position includes:
  - **Cash at bank:** £4.8 million
  - **Net assets:** £48.9 million
  - **Estate value:** £80 million

RSM went on to note investment in fixed asset improvements during the year, reflected in the cash flow statement (Page 36).

- **Disclosures and Adjustments:** following receipt of the updated October Management Accounts, RSM confirmed the Going Concern conclusion remained unchanged based on current information and forward-looking assessments and RSM went on to outline the usual disclosures, including payments made on staff departures, write-offs etc. A minor adjustment was identified to the write-off figure on page 48, which will be corrected from £182k to £96k before final submission. This amendment is a disclosure point only and does not affect the College's financial performance.
- **Pension Note:** RSM explained that the LGPS pension scheme shows no asset recognised in the accounts, which is appropriate under accounting standards. This reflects market conditions and discount rate changes.
- **Regularity Conclusion:** RSM confirmed an unmodified, unqualified regularity opinion, representing the highest level of assurance available under the DfE framework. This confirms compliance with the use of public funds and statutory responsibilities.

RSM concluded that the financial statements and disclosures provides a clear and accurate representation of the College's financial position and governance arrangements.

The CFO explained that further minor amendments could be identified prior to the date of Corporation. One error relating to the awarding of a 3% pay award to all staff would need to be amended to 2%. It was added that the Finance and resources Committee would also be reviewing the Financial Statements and Annual Accounts; noting any amendments picked up at that Committee Meeting would be addressed also.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- **write-off figure on page 48 of the Financial Statement and Annual Accounts to be corrected from £182k to £96k before final submission.**
- **the pay award for all staff is to be amended from 3% to 2%.**

#### **8.1 Draft Regularity Audit Self-Assessment Questionnaire (RASAC)**

RSM returned to the draft RASAC explaining it formed the starting point for planning regularity audit work and commended the quality of the responses provided.

The Committee considered the new requirement of the Chair of Corporation to sign the Statement of Responsibilities of the Members of the Corporation, confirming discussion with the Accounting Officer regarding the Statement of Regularity, Propriety and Compliance. RSM advised that the Accounting

Officer is best placed to sign the Statement of Regularity, Propriety and Compliance due to their direct involvement with financial transactions, and by doing so, confirms there are no matters requiring disclosure. RSM emphasised that the Committee discharges its responsibility through scrutiny and recommendation of the RASAC and by maintaining awareness of ongoing discussions between the Chair of Corporation and the Accounting Officer throughout the year. RSM clarified that it is the Chair's responsibility to articulate this ongoing rigour and oversight to the Corporation.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to **ADVISE** the Corporation to **ACCEPT** and **APPROVE** the RASAC.

### 8.3 **Draft Management Letter on Financial Statements including Final Regularity Audit**

*(The Draft Audit Findings Report for the Year Ended 31 July 2025 were included in the Meeting Pack)*

RSM presented the Draft Management Letter; noting ongoing works to the Going Concern assessment following receipt of the October Management Accounts. RSM confirmed, at this stage, it was intending to issue unqualified, unmodified opinions on both the financial statements (true and fair view) and regularity, including the subsidiary accounts. RSM reiterated the previous year's material uncertainty regarding going concern had been resolved and current assessments indicated forward-looking covenant compliance, with no breaches identified up to the period of July 2027.

Items noted as "outstanding" would be updated in readiness for submission to Corporation in line with ongoing work with the CFO.

Materiality remains unchanged at £615,000. RSM drew the Committee's attention to the minor Unadjusted Misstatements which were reported as not material.

RSM outlined conclusions to key risk areas:

- **Management Override of Controls:** testing of journals and estimates found no evidence of management override or bias or non-routine or potentially novel, contentious or repercussive transactions. Estimates such as depreciation were also confirmed to be unbiased.
- **Income Testing:** RSM reported the update from the DfE Funding Assurance Audit, confirming a clawback of circa £12k which was considerably lower than a £100k provision included in the financial accounts. RSM confirmed this would be an unadjusted misstatement but was not material. Funding errors had been identified during summer audit work (but had been rectified prior to the final ILR submission) along with a number of control and data quality points. RSM confirmed that in terms of funding; the accounts **present a true and fair** view.
- **Going Concern:** RSM reiterate again that work is ongoing but nearing completion. Based on testing performed, there was no evidence of forward-looking covenant breaches. RSM confirmed its agreement to the College's conclusion that it was a going concern through to July 2027; noting the Corporation would need to affirm this again at its Corporation Meeting in December.
- **Pensions:** LGPS accounting treatment is appropriate. No asset is recognised due to accounting rules. An unadjusted item being an unfunded pension liability of £34,000 remains but is not material.
- **Grant Accounting:** Capital grants from the DfE have been correctly accounted for with investment on the campus.
- **Regularity:** RSM drew the Committee's attention to the Procedures and Finding, Regularity section noting that the two members of staff had left the College post year-end which should have been accounted for in the 2024/25 financial statements and was not; however sums were not material. RSM confirmed from a regularity perspective – there were no issues to be concerned about.

RSM confirmed that, from a regularity perspective, there are **no matters to report** and that it intended issue an **unmodified regularity conclusion**.

RSM outlined a number of data control/housekeeping points and one low level control point; confirming all recommendations had been accepted by management. RSM confirmed an updated final draft of the Management Letter would be provided to Corporation.

**A Governor observed that the report contains several references to apprenticeships, which at first glance may appear significant. The Governor sought clarification on whether these issues represent material concerns or minor compliance points.** RSM confirmed the matters were minor data quality and housekeeping issues, with one low-level control point which did not indicate

fundamental weaknesses. RSM confirmed findings aligned with similar observations from the DfE Funding Assurance Audit and internal audit reviews. The Executive Team confirmed that areas identified where recommendations they had anticipated.

#### 8.4 **Financial Statements of the College's Subsidiary Companies**

*(The Financial Statements of the College's Subsidiary Companies, Bishop Burton Farm Enterprises Ltd, Bishop Burton Farm Ltd and Bishop Burton Riseholme Limited were included in the Meeting Pack)*

RSM provided a summary overview; noting two of the entities were dormant. The third entity relates to commercial operations, which functions as expected, has an unqualified opinion and is a going concern. The financial statements reflect its current position, including sales, costs and a profit which is subsequently gifted to the College in accordance with the relevant rules.

The Committee noted the positive assurances provided from RSM and the anticipated unqualified and unmodified conclusions on all elements of the auditing works including the true and fair view of the financial statements and on regularity. The Committee **RESOLVED** to **ADVISE** the Corporation of this assurance and controls - subject to final amendments that may be required.

#### 8.5 **RSM's Emerging Risks Update**

*(RSM's Emerging Risks (Autumn 2025) was included in the Meeting Pack)*

RSM provided a summary overview of the document. No questions were raised.

### 9 **Outstanding Audit Recommendations**

*(The Outstanding Audit Recommendations – November 2025 were provided in the Meeting Pack)*

The CFO provided an overview of outstanding audit recommendations as of November 2025. Recommendations from 2023/24 remain and new recommendations from 2024/25 audits have been added for comparison. The CFO confirmed that 2024/25 recommendations will be reviewed alongside those from 2023/24 to ensure no issues have reoccurred. Any repeated recommendations will be reported to the Committee at its next meeting. Recommendations relating to the DfE Funding Assurance Audit are still to be incorporated. **The Committee discussed the format of the Outstanding Audit Recommendations Report. It was noted that the actions lack clear dates and a suggestion was made to include the original target date, any revised dates and the final implementation date to allow visibility and monitoring of progress as well as resource prioritisation.** The CFO confirmed that dates were included and missed deadlines were highlighted as part of reporting to the Committee. The DG advised that a similar discussion had been undertaken at a previous meeting and it was agreed to review the Minutes and update the CFO. The CFO agreed to review the format to consider adding progress updates and clearer date tracking without creating an undue administrative burden.

The Committee **noted** its **review** and **monitoring** of the Audit Recommendations.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- **DfE Funding Assurance Audit Recommendations to be added to the Outstanding Audit Recommendations**
- **DG to review previous minutes to confirm what discussions have taken place regarding clearer timescales and progress tracking in the Outstanding Audit Recommendations report and CFO to consider revising the format**

**The Committee reiterated the importance of showing progress on actions, even where completion is pending, to provide assurance that recommendations are being addressed.**

### 10 **Risk Management**

The Committee was asked to advise the Corporation on the adequacy and effectiveness of its risk management framework.

#### 10.1 **Risk Management Annual Report, Risk Management Strategy and the Risk Management Policy**

*(The Executive Summary Report entitled Annual Risk Management Report – 2024-25 which appended the Risk Management Annual Report, Risk Management Strategy and the Risk Management Policy were included in the Meeting Pack)*

The CFO provided a summary overview of the Risk Management Annual Report outlining its content and changes made to the risk framework following recommendations made by the Internal Audit Report on Risk Management. The CFO explained that the Risk Management Annual Report was supported by the

Risk Management Strategy and Risk Management Policy which were provided to the Committee for their consideration and recommendation to the Corporation. **A Governor requested clarification on whether work had begun to define and more clearly articulate the College's risk appetite for specific areas.** Extensive discussion was undertaken and was agreed that the Executive Team would consider the value of this approach and report back to the Committee. External training, to support with this development, was signposted. **A Governor commented that the approach aligned with work underway to map partnership arrangements. It was explained that, depending on the strategic value of a partnership, the Corporation may determine it was more comfortable accepting a higher level of risk on, for example, one partnership arrangement to another – depending on the opportunities and benefits it would bring.**

The Committee received the Risk Management Annual Report, Strategy, and Policy. It agreed to **RECOMMEND** their **APPROVAL** to the Corporation and noted that the inclusion of risk appetite in the framework would be considered at the next meeting.

**ACTION: CFO to discuss with the Executive Team the inclusion of risk appetite within the College's risk management framework, identifying areas where the Corporation is comfortable with higher risk and areas where it is risk averse and bring back proposal to the next Audit Committee Meeting.**

## 10.2 Risk Register and Risk Register Action Management Plan

*(the High-Level Risk Register 2025/26 and High-Level Risk Management Action Plan 2025/26 were included in the Meeting Pack)*

The CFO explained that both the Risk Register and the Risk Register Action Management Plan (**RRMAP**) had been updated. The RRMAP now reflects recommendations made by the most recent internal audits. Discussion was undertaken. **A Governor referred to two risks categorised "red"; noting both related to HE. It was queried what impact the controls and actions to manage were having - to reduce the level of risk moving forward.** The CFO reported the College's HE provision was long standing risk owing to the continued decline in recruitment. The VPGPP explained that new "actions to manage" had been implemented to mitigate risk further including the academic restructure to strengthen progression routes. The VPGPP explained that new actions would also be identified in the College's Growth Strategy - which is to be presented at the strategic sprint session prior to the Corporation Meeting.

A Governor referred to the RRMAP and in particular the scoring aligned to Cyber Risk: "*Failure to adequately prepare, plan and implement mitigation strategies against potential cyber-attacks resulting in data loss and breach of GDPR regulations, financial loss, reputational damage and impact business continuity*" Discussion was undertaken as to whether the likelihood score should be high and the impact low owing to the controls in place. The Executive Team is to review this.

**ACTION: Executive Team to review whether the interpretation of the likelihood and impact ratings aligned to Cyber Security are clear.**

## 11 Health and Safety

*(The Executive Summary Report entitled Health & Safety Update appending the Agricultural Engineering Departments Departmental Health and Safety Audit and Accident Statistics Report 4th Quarter Update (1/06/2025 – 31/08/2025) were included in the Meeting Pack)*

The Committee was asked to review the Termly Health and Safety Report (including a deep dive into Agricultural Engineering) to monitor health and safety at the College. The DG reported that she had, in error, omitted to upload the Termly Health and Safety Report (25 November 2025) and noted her apologies. The DG confirmed that she would circulate the paper immediately after the Meeting and any questions or queries could be raised. The DG, on the request of the Committee "shared screen" so the Committee could review the paper. The CPO talked through the paper in detail (*saved in the record as Tabled Item 2 - Health and Safety Update*)

During the interim period, RSM reverted to Agenda Item 8, noting he had omitted to ask the Committee whether they were aware of any fraud against the College which they wanted to make the Auditors aware of, which could impact on RSM's work. The Committee confirmed that they did not.

The CPO reported that the Agricultural Engineering Departments Departmental Health and Safety Audit had also been uploaded for the Committee's review and consideration.

*Rachel Robson left the Meeting: 4:47pm*

The CPO explained that Health and Safety Executive feedback had now been provided after the RIDDOR event in the Agricultural Engineering Workshop. The CPO confirmed that the College had, in addition, implemented its own actions (over and above those recommended by the HSE).

The DG confirmed the Corporation's Link Governor for Health and Safety would be attending the Bishop Burton campus on 1 December 2025.

**The Committee noted the importance of undertaking regular health and safety visits across all areas of the campus both at Riseholme and at Bishop Burton to ensure a "chalk face" refresh on practice in action. A Governor referred to the Accident Statistics provided; noting the value of having external benchmarking against other land based educational colleges or against the land-based sector, in general. A comparative benchmark was requested to allow the Committee an opportunity to triangulate data.** The CPO confirmed that the Principal had been lobbying Landex to develop comparable health and safety reporting for landbased colleges only.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- **CPO to source health and safety / accident statistics from landbased colleges and/or explore accident percentages in comparable landbased sector workplaces**
- **DG to circulate the Termly Health and Safety Report (25 November 2025) to Committee Members.**

#### **12 Data Returns**

*(The Executive Summary Report entitled "Data Returns" and ancillary documents were included in the Meeting Pack)*

The Committee were asked to consider and advise the Corporation on the adequacy and effectiveness of its arrangements in place to monitor its regulatory data returns. The VPGPP provided a summary overview. No areas of concern were reported and the all-data returns were submitted. The Committee acknowledged the report; noting compliance.

#### **13 Partnership Arrangements**

*(The Executive Summary Report entitled Partnership Arrangements and Reporting was included in the Meeting Pack)*

The Chair noted the absence of the Principal who was to provide a verbal update. The CFO explained that actions arising from the last Audit Committee were not in line with the requirements of the Financial Regulations. The CFO explained that the College only operated a few formal partnership arrangements; noting any requirement for approval had been inserted as a consequence of legacy arrangements that had involved the transferring of resources.

*RSM left the Meeting: 16:56*

The CFO put forward that the Financial Regulations would benefit from review; noting the College had a broad scope of partnerships/contracts/arrangements in place which could fall under the definition of "partnership" but not all of which would need approval. The CFO added that examples of these arrangements had been included in the report for the Committee's consideration and to open discussion. **A Governor noted that the report was a useful starting point but emphasised that the Corporation's responsibilities extended beyond financial risk and included reputational risk as well as safeguarding, health and safety and the quality of provision.** The CFO put forward that the Financial Regulations did not necessarily need amendment given the scope of the different arrangements in place; adding that the Annual Report would be developed and provide assurance.

*David Richardson left the Meeting: 5:59pm*

The DG referred to the Financial Regulations, highlighting the requirement that all formal partnership agreements must be approved by the Corporation. The Committee were advised that, unless the Financial Regulations were amended, a strict interpretation would mean that the Corporation was not currently acting in full compliance with them. Discussion was undertaken. The CFO noted the differentiation between "**formal**" and "**informal**". The CFO clarified that formal partnership arrangements would involve signed contractual arrangements between two parties; noting the importance of distinguishing between contractual cyclical arrangements and partnership arrangements.

The CFO explained many "partnership arrangements" began as informal arrangements; which developed into formal arrangements and ultimately a contractual partnership arrangement. The CFO put forward that a pragmatic approach needed to be taken as to what required approval from Corporation and what did not. Guidance was sought from wbg. Wbg noted the importance of clearly defining what

constitutes a “partnership”; adding that a partnership should be supported by a formal contract outlining the terms of engagement, the services being delivered and the College’s oversight responsibilities. Wbg added that where a partner delivers education on behalf of the College, the agreement must specify the scope of delivery, accountability arrangements and the College’s obligations.

**The Committee agreed that a clear distinction should be documented between partnerships - characterised by active collaboration and higher risk exposure - and standard contractual agreements for routine service delivery adding that distinction would support internal audit processes and risk assessment.** WBG confirmed that partnerships typically carry greater risk due to the level of involvement and shared responsibility; therefore, robust oversight and assurance processes are essential. **The Chair noted the progress made in discussions and confirmed that discussions would be picked up at the next meeting of the Audit Committee.** Discussion continued and the following actions were agreed.

**ACTIONS:**

- **Chair and Principal to have a discussion by way of update and moving the matter forward**
- **DG to add discussion on Partnership Arrangements to the next Committee Meeting Agenda**

**14 CFO Update - Staff Purchasing Cards Policy**

The CFO provided a verbal update; noting the one purchasing card had been issued which was to the Principal. No other applications have been received to date. The Committee **NOTED** the update provided and the number of purchasing cards in issue.

**15 Re-Tendering Specifications for the External Auditing Service**

*(The Executive Summary Report entitled: Re-Tendering Specifications for the External Auditing Service was provided in the Meeting Pack)*

The CFO provided a summary overview of the draft tender and the process involved. A typographical error was noted; the date should read 26 January rather than 25 January. The CFO noted that Governors would be invited to participate in the interview and scoring process to ensure robust evaluation and oversight. The tender is scheduled to be circulated on 5 January 2026. **A Governors commented that the evaluation criteria of a 50:50 weighting between price and quality may not provide sufficient flexibility to select the most appropriate provider. It was recommended that the weighting be amended to 60:40 in favour of quality, consistent with sector practice – adding that social value should also be incorporated into the quality criteria. The Committee also discussed the proposed three-year contract term; querying how potential changes during the period would be managed.** The CFO confirmed that tender questions would address this and that hourly rates would be requested to ensure transparency. **Governors noted the importance of flexibility and clarity in pricing structures.**

**The Committee emphasised the importance of selecting a provider that offers both quality and value for money.**

The Committee resolved to **RECOMMEND** the draft tender to the Corporation subject to the following amendments:

- the draft tender will be updated to reflect the revised weighting and inclusion of social value criteria
- clarity of process for managing changes during the contract term is to be sought with assurance of hourly rates

**ACTIONS:**

- **CFO to amend the draft tender to reflect revised weighting and confirm hourly rate of auditors and how any additional costs during the term of the contract would be addressed**
- **DG to circulate request to Governors to support with the interviewing and scoring process**

There being no further business Meeting closed at 5:19 pm.

Chair

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Name

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