

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER**

**Present**

Greg Clarke	Governor
Peter Grant	Governor
Philippa Poland	Governor
Mark Swales	Governor
Lee Walker	Governor

The quorum for the meeting was at least 4 Members. The meeting was quorate.

**In attendance**

Mark Atton	Director of Business Systems & Information
Sharon Harmon	Clerk to the Corporation
Terry Hutchinson	Director of Student Information Services (Items 1-3)
Rachel Maguire	Chief Operating Officer, People & Information
Nikki Mell	Head of Health & Safety
Barrie Shipley	Chief Operating Officer, Finance & Infrastructure
Paul Smith	Director of IT Infrastructure
Ryan Falls	Cavanagh Kelly
Lisa Smith	RSM

The meeting was held on MS Teams and commenced at 5.00 pm.

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**1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received for Preetha Kumar, Governor.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

Members should declare any personal or financial obligation, allegiance or loyalty which would in any way affect decisions in relation to the subjects under discussion.

There were no declarations of interest made.

**3 Data Compliance Monitoring Visits**

The Director of Student Information Services (DSI) presented a data compliance monitoring report providing a detailed update on data compliance monitoring visits conducted during the 2023/2024 academic year.

Members noted that a total of 6 visits were undertaken during the 2023/2024 academic year. Members reviewed the visits summary report and noted the detailed visit reports. Members discussed the findings of the summary report and asked for further detailed on how findings are analysed and followed up. The DSI explained the process of analysis, follow up testing on findings and planned actions for correcting any errors found. Members noted that the feedback received for the visits has been positive, from a range of sources, and agreed the visits had proved useful activities to support data quality and funding compliance monitoring.

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	<p>Members agreed the visit summary sheet was sufficient for future update reports. Members noted the plans for data compliance monitoring activities for 2024/25. Members agreed the monitoring visits provided a good level of assurance and noted the positive impact following the introduction of the new assurance process.</p> <p>Members thanked the DSI for the update report.</p>	
	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>Note: The DSI left the meeting.</i></p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	
	<p>The Head of Health &amp; Safety (HH&amp;S) presented the Health &amp; Safety Annual Report 2023/24. Members considered the contents of the report which provided an overview of key health and safety activities in the past academic year 2023/2024 and sets out key priorities for this academic year. Members discussed the updates in relation to supporting activities and noted the detailed breakdown of accident statistics for both staff and students. Members were assured that the significant majority of accidents reported are minor in nature and that all accidents were investigated and followed up as required.</p>	
	<p>Members discussed the positive student survey results and noted that overall students feel safe in college. Members were assured that in the small number of responses where students reported not feeling safe these concerns are followed up by the Safeguarding Team.</p>	
	<p>Members asked about benchmarking activities and sharing of best practice with other organisations to support improvements in health and safety. The HH&amp;S explained that DNCG were part of the AoC regional Safety Group and the JISC Safety Group.</p>	
	<p>Members were assured by the positive Health and Safety report and thanked the HH&amp;S and the Health and Safety Team for all their hard work in implementing best practice and continually driving improvement in Health and Safety across the Group.</p>	
	<b>Health and Safety Policy</b>	
	<p>Members reviewed and discussed updates to the Group's Health and Safety Policy. Members agreed the updates to the policy were helpful and appropriate.</p>	
	<p>Members noted that the policy does not cover mental health and asked if mental health is covered elsewhere. The COOPI confirmed that there are policies in place that cover mental health and wellbeing. Members recommended that policies relating to mental health be referenced under the relevant policies and procedures section of the Health and Safety policy.</p>	
	<p><b>Action:</b> The COOPI to update the Health and Safety Policy to included reference to mental health policies under relevant policies and procedures.</p>	<b>COOPI</b>
	<p>Members sought further detail on how policies are shared with the organisation once approved. The COOPI explained how policies and procedures are shared and implemented across the organisation.</p>	
	<p><b>Resolution:</b> Members approved the updates to the Health &amp; Safety Policy for recommendation to Corporation Board for approval with recommended updates.</p>	

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The HH&S provided an update on the wider introduction of the revised area health and safety inspection and audit programme, providing members with assurance that health and safety visits are going well and feedback on the inspection and audit process from colleagues across the Group is positive. Members were advised that the summary of outcomes and actions following first and second area visits and the level of assurance provided will continue to be reported at future committee meetings. Members discussed the frequency of area visits and how these are planned. Members agreed the HASMAP was a useful addition to the control and assurance framework.

Members thanked the HH&S for the update.

*Note: The HH&S left meeting.*

**5 Support Areas Annual Reports****Business Systems & Information (BSI) Annual Report**

The Director of Business Systems & Information (DBSI) presented the Business Systems & Information (BSI) Annual Report. Members considered and discussed the contents of the report providing an annual progress update on the BSI Team development, BSI strategic projects, contract management, digital Strategy and setting out future plans.

Members noted and discussed the progress made against BSI strategic projects. Members discussed the updated government guidance on 'meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges' and were assured the College was meeting the measures set out in the standards.

Members asked for further detail on how the Tech Board was developing and how business areas fed into the Tech Board. The DBSI explained how the different areas across the College are invited to contribute to the Tech Board.

Members were assured by the BSI update report and substantial progress made in BSI. Members thanked and congratulated the DBSI and the BIS team on their achievements.

**IT Infrastructure Annual Report**

The Director of IT Infrastructure (DITI) presented the IT Infrastructure annual report providing an update on development within the IT Infrastructure team, progress against the Digital Strategy and IT Infrastructure projects and setting out future planned activities.

Members were assured by the continued investment in IT infrastructure and progress against delivery of the Group's strategic objectives, not only for delivering curriculum, but also in realising business system improvement and efficiencies. Members noted the significant progress in consolidating the IT Infrastructure across the Group. Members noted that the College had achieved recertification of Cyber Essentials assessment providing external assurance for IT security.

Members thanked and congratulated the DITI and the IT Infrastructure team on their achievements.

*Note: The DITI and the DBSI left the meeting.*

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**Procurement Services Annual Report 2023/24**

The COOFI presented the Procurement Services Annual Report for 2023-24 setting out the achievements in the period and outlining plans for the coming year.

Members noted it has been another busy year for the procurement function, with challenges achieving savings due to rising inflationary pressures on the economy driving upward pressures on costs. Members were assured that significant savings had been achieved, as well as ensuring compliance with public contract regulations and maximising available grant funding.

Members discussed the saving achieved looking at the breakdown over the course of the year and the length of the contracts. Members discussed receiving further assurances to demonstrate value for money. The COOFI agreed to look at reporting on value for money and savings to provide further breakdown in future reporting as discussed.

Members agreed the report provided assurance that the Group has an adequate system of internal control in ensuring value for money when procuring goods and services.

**6 Minutes of a meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 12 June 2024 and any matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 12 June 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**Matters Arising**

Item 4 - The Clerk reported on suggested training for the Corporation Board on AI and how the Group utilises and manages AI. The Clerk will canvass the Corporation Board to clarify what specifically they would like to know about AI and feedback to SLT to arrange training.

Item 9 – Members noted that the draft Internal Audit Plan 2024/25 was included in meeting papers for the committee to consider for approval.

Item 13 - The Clerk confirmed that the Chair of the Finance and Resources committee has been invited to attend the A&R committee meeting on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and has confirmed their attendance.

**7 Audit Recommendations and Actions (Composite Report)**

The COOFI presented the Audit Recommendations and Actions report. Members noted that since the last meeting of the committee in June 2024 nine further recommendation has been added to the Audit Recommendations Tracker following the completion of the internal auditors follow up report, Higher Education Framework audit and ESFA Mock Funding Assurance audit.

Members noted that, excluding the actions that are not yet due, 99% of actions have been completed or closed as superseded by subsequent audits. Members were assured that there are no high priority actions past their implementation date or not completed. Members reviewed the detail and analysis of the summary of recommendations tracked as at September 2024. Members were assured that any outstanding actions were underway. Members agreed that good progress continues to be made on internal audit recommendations implementation.

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8	<p><b>Group Risk Register</b></p> <p>Members received the Group Risk Register. Members noted that the Audit and Risk committee has responsibility for seeking assurance on the robustness and adequacy of the Group’s risk management framework and has specific oversight of four risks on the Group Risk Register relating to legal, digital, data and business systems and MIS. Members reviewed and discussed updates to the risk profiles and were assured by progress against planned actions.</p> <p>Members reviewed the Risk Register trend analysis of residual risk scores to consider how the assessed scores have changed over the last 12 months comparing the latest residual risk scores assessment against the target risk as defined by the Corporation Board. Members noted that there are currently two strategic risks relating to estates and data that exceed the target risk set by the Corporation Board. The COOFI explained the reason these risks were currently above target risk appetite and provided an update on progress against mitigating actions. Members were assured by progress against planned actions and were confident that these risks will be mitigated further by the next reporting period.</p> <p>Members discussed how risk management is communicated across the Group. Members felt assured that risks are being appropriately assessed and mitigating actions are undertaken, and that effective risk management and internal control systems continue to provide a high level of assurance to the Committee.</p>	
9	<p><b>Internal Audit Reports</b></p> <p>The Committee received the ESFA Mock Funding Assurance internal audit report. The Internal Auditor outlined the scope of the audit and the audit findings. Members noted the audit had identified four ‘medium’ actions and one ‘low’ priority action for management.</p> <p>The Internal Auditor presented the Follow Up internal audit report for September 2024. Members noted the internal audit opinion that DN Colleges Group has demonstrated good progress in implementing agreed management actions. All but three management actions had been fully implemented or superseded. The three remaining actions were ‘low’ priority. New due dates for implementation were agreed for all outstanding actions. Members were assured by the good progress made.</p> <p>The Committee received the Higher Education Framework internal audit report. The Internal Auditor outlined the scope of the audit and the audit findings. Members noted that the audit found that the Group is building its HE portfolio taking into account the needs of both local business and learners. In addition, the Group supported the growth of its HE portfolio via online marketing schemes and advertising campaigns. To support and encourage current Further Education (FE) students to progress onto an HE courses, FE students are provided the opportunity to join HE progression events and HE tutors are attending FE tutor sessions to promote and encourage students to progress internally. The audit opinion is that the Board can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective. Members were assured by the positive report.</p>	
	<p><b>Action:</b> The Clerk to put the Higher Education Framework internal audit report on the agenda for the next HEPQ committee meeting to provide the committee with further assurance around HE provision.</p>	<p><b>Clerk</b></p>

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The Internal Auditor presented the Continuous Assurance Visit 3 2023/24 report. Members were assured that of the 10 control areas tested that all documented controls have been complied with during the period under review and that there is a high-level of assurance that key controls are in place and operating effectively in these areas. Members were assured by the positive report.

The Internal Auditor presented the Annual internal audit report for the year ended 31 July 2024. Members were assured by the audit opinion that DN College Group has an adequacy and effectiveness framework for risk management, governance and internal control. Members noted identified enhancements to the framework for risk management, governance and internal control to ensure that it remains adequate and effective. Members were assured by the positive report.

Members received the Internal Audit Progress Report to October 2024 noting that since the last Audit and Risk Committee in June 2024, the remaining audits for the 2023/24 year have been completed with final reports being agreed with management.

#### Audit Plan for 2024/25

The Internal Auditor presented the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25. Members considered the plan in terms of areas for coverage, areas of focus and timetable for 2024/25. Members were assured that the internal audit plan is based on analysis of DN Colleges Group's organisational objectives, risk profile and assurance framework as well as other factors affecting the Group in the year ahead, including changes within the sector. The plan includes discussion on audit priorities and coverage with management and the Audit and Risk Committee. Members considered whether there were any areas missed in terms of the internal audit plan for the year. Members agreed the audit plan was well balanced across all of the risks and covered the appropriate areas of focus for 2024/25.

**Resolution:** The Audit and Risk committee approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

### 10 Teachers Pensions EOYC Return 2023/24

The COOFI advised the Committee that DN Colleges Group is responsible for producing the information, maintaining proper records complying with the terms of Teachers' Pensions Regulations 2010 and the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014, as amended, and for preparing the End of Year Certificate (EOYC) for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Member noted that Cavanagh Kelly were engaged as External Auditors to prepare the letters in relation to the EOYC and annual Reporting Guidance TP05 issued by the Teachers' Pensions. Cavanagh Kelly identified no exceptions or errors except for a minor rounding difference, and, in conclusion, gave assurance that the contributions shown on the EOYC were paid in accordance with the rules of the Teachers' Pensions.

Members were assured the EOYC 2023/24 was submitted correctly within the required deadline.

### 11 Draft Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2023/24

The COOFI presented the draft of the completed Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2023/24 for DN Colleges Group. Members noted the regularity self-assessment questionnaire (RSAQ) is designed by the ESFA to provide clarity of the

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	<p>accountability framework, key requirements and the type of evidence to provide; it supports corporations in drafting their statement of regularity, propriety and compliance. Corporations must provide a copy of their completed RSAQ to the reporting accountant, signed by the accounting officer and the Chair of the Corporation Board.</p> <p>Members noted corporations must publish a statement of regularity, propriety and compliance within their annual accounts. Corporations must also appoint a reporting accountant to provide an assurance report on regularity each financial year. The reporting accountant must be the same as the external auditor.</p> <p>Members noted the RSAQ is reviewed by Cavanagh Kelly in line with their reporting accountant's responsibilities for reporting on regularity, whereby they will look to obtain limited assurance and to report to the Corporation and to the ESFA in accordance with the requirements of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice.</p> <p>Members noted the contents of the draft Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2023/24 for their information.</p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>Draft Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24</b></p> <p>The COOFI presented the draft Audit &amp; Risk Committee's Annual Report for the committee's consideration. Members noted the Audit &amp; Risk Committee's Annual Report is a requirement of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice (ACOP) and is designed to assist the Chief Executive and the Corporation Board with their respective responsibilities for the College's systems, controls, and risk management, which underpin the Group's strategic objectives.</p> <p>Members considered the draft report and agreed with the contents. Members agreed with the view on the committee's effectiveness and how it has fulfilled its remit. Members agreed the opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Corporation's assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency, and the safeguarding of assets was correct. Members noted the final report would be presented at the A&amp;R Committee meeting on 27th November 2024 for consideration.</p> <p>Members noted two minor corrections to the committee membership list. Amend the spelling of 'Clarke' and add Lee walker to list. The Committee agreed to feedback any further comments to the COOFI before the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>COOFI</b></p>
<p><b>Action:</b> The COOFI to make corrections to the draft Audit &amp; Risk Committee's Annual Report as noted.</p>		
<b>13</b>	<p><b>Annual Report on Fraud, Irregularities and Whistleblowing 2023/24</b></p> <p>Members received the Annual Report on Fraud, Irregularities and Whistleblowing 2023/24. Members noted the report covers those items that have been brought to the attention of the Senior Leadership Team and the Clerk to the Corporation over the course of the year to 31 July 2024. Member were advised that any items that are of perceived importance or materiality are recorded and reported.</p> <p>Members were assured that there had been no instances of fraud, Irregularities or Whistleblowing during 2023/24.</p>	
<b>14</b>	<p><b>Review of Committee Terms of Reference</b></p>	

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Members reviewed the Audit and Risk committee's Terms of Reference (ToRs). Members noted the ToRs were last reviewed by the Committee in June 2023 and approved by the Corporation Board in July 2023. Following review members agreed to update clause 6.10 of the ToRs to include reference to receiving assurance reports covering Data Compliance Monitoring, IT Infrastructure and Business Systems and Information. There were no further proposed changes to the committee's ToRs.

Members agreed the Audit and Risk Committee's Terms of Reference 2024-25 for recommendation to the Corporation Board for approval with proposed updates.

**15 Committee Chairs Report to Corporation Board**

Members considered the business of the meeting and recorded key items and any changes to strategic risks identified for feedback to the Corporation Board in the Committee Chair's Report. The following items were highlighted for inclusion:

- The implementation of the new Health and Safety framework enhances risk management and internal control is having a positive impact on the level of assurance.
- The implementation of the data compliance monitoring framework provides positive assurance.
- The implementation of the digital strategy is having a positive impact on the IT Infrastructure and Business Information Systems.
- The Risk Management framework is operating effectively.
- Internal Audit's Annual Report confirms the Group has an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control.
- Audit reports received on ESFA Funding Audit and HE Framework provide positive opinions and a high level of assurance.

**16 Any Other Business**

There were no items of any other business.

**17 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee is scheduled for Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024, at Doncaster College

The meeting closed at 7.08 pm

**Sharon Harmon**  
**Clerk to the Corporation**

**Signed:** ..... (Chair)

**Date:** .....

<b>TABLE OF ACTIONS</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
02/10/24	4	The COOPI to update the Health and Safety Policy to included reference to	R Maguire, COOPI	Oct 2024



		mental health policies under relevant policies and procedures.		
02/10/24	9	The Clerk to put the Higher Education Framework internal audit report on the agenda for the next HEPQ committee meeting to provide the committee with further assurance around HE provision.	S Harmon, Clerk	Nov 2024
02/10/24	12	The COOFI to make corrections to the draft Audit & Risk Committee's Annual Report as noted.	B Shipley, COOFI	Nov 2024