

# BOSTON COLLEGE

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 JUNE 2025

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### 1. **PRESENT**

Sandra Williamson (Chair), Daran Bland and Katy Priestley.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Claire Foster (Principal and CEO), Debbie Holland (Chief Operating Officer), Tom Hayward (Head of Finance), Scott Winter (ICCA), Gareth Jones and Sam Lawe (RSM).

Apologies for absence were received from Andy Atkins and Shriuti Trivedi.

Attendance: 60%

### 2. **ACTION LOG AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKING**

Members reviewed the committee's action log and noted progress made against the points on it. On the garden leave question, Gareth Jones advised the committee that he was satisfied that the transaction was approved. Corporation committees had been asked to review the four risk questions referred to them and the Audit committee will consider feedback at the next meeting along with feedback from the governance questionnaire. ●

The recommendations tracking log was reviewed. The suggested analysis of contributions by curriculum area and funding stream is to be reviewed by Debbie Holland and Scott Winter to consider how it might be resolved. They are also to review the recommendation on FTE calculations which were noted to have no payroll implications. ●

### 3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025 were reviewed and approved as a correct record.

### 4. **INTERNAL AUDIT**

Scott Winter presented two audit reports and the Internal Audit Plan.

#### a) IT Data Security, Infrastructure & Disaster Recovery

The report gave a Substantial assurance opinion and contained one low priority recommendation.

Scott advised that this review was carried out at many colleges and this outcome was very positive. The one recommendation was that the recovery plan needs to be reviewed annually and also needs to refer to a requirement to test the disaster recovery plan periodically, auditors having noted that this did take place but was not referred to within the plan. Scott told the committee that outcomes in other colleges were often not as good and commended the college team on their performance.

Daran Bland asked about general staff training and members were told that there were frequent training exercises provided for staff to carry out.

## b) Funding Review

The funding review, which was noted to be an advisory report, had looked at areas where extra funding could be claimed. The report contained three recommendations. Potential to increase funding on some distance learning courses taken by unemployed learners had been identified and the college's funding claim had increased as a result. Other recommendations were about increasing the college's ALS claim and possible growth areas. Claire Foster commented that increasing ALS would not necessarily increase income directly but would give a better service to students.

Sandra Williamson noted that the report had been carried out as a result of a management suggestion and had been very useful, demonstrating good use of resources.

## c) Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 and Strategy to 2026/27

The committee noted that the plan was currently in draft and could in any event be amended in year if required.

Scott advised that the plan is risk based and has moved away from financial audits to make better use of resources since finance is also looked at by the external auditors.

A discussion took place about English and maths performance and whether more could be done on reviewing this. Daran Bland suggested that there was an attendance element to the English and maths issues and auditing may not help with that unless the auditors have sector-wide views of best practice. There is a change of policy which affects English and maths resits and the delivery model may change as a result of a change in funding guidance. Daran suggested that work with peers may be more relevant on this. Scott confirmed that all colleges had issues in this area.

A planned staffing costs audit will have cross college implications and Scott suggested that the drivers of efficient use of resources - staff utilisation, curriculum efficiency and group sizes - can be added to the terms of reference for this review. The audit plan with this amendment was approved by the committee.

## 5. **AUDIT PLAN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2025**

Gareth Jones presented RSM's audit plan for the year ended 31st July 2025.

Gareth introduced Sam Lawe who will manage the college audit and who has previously worked as part of the team. Gareth explained that the scope, materiality and key risks were largely unchanged.

It was noted that the Search and Governance committee had raised a question over the extent to which the audit would review issues highlighted in the Weston College report. Gareth highlighted that the regularity review and declarations of related party transactions would cover some of these points. The normal audit process would look at these. Scott Winter said that at Weston there had been staff, auditor and governor failings. The main problems arose from the dominance of the Principal and his contract of employment and a question for auditors would be whether an inappropriate contract would be picked up. Gareth said that the regularity audit work is fairly robust. Daran Bland suggested that reliance is placed on delegation, segregation and management acting properly. It was noted that there is a new legal requirement relating to failure to prevent fraud but that collusion is very difficult to detect.

Daran asked about the review of pecuniary interests. Members were told that the Search and Governance committee had looked at the Weston recommendations to see where action might be needed. It was suggested that the Search and Governance committee review the declarations of interest.

Gareth highlighted the Emerging Issues document and noted that the risk register reflected some of these issues. Debbie Holland advised that the fraud policy would be reviewed over the summer and brought back to the committee for consideration.

## **6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

Members received a report from the Chief Operating Officer which included the risk register, detail of the top 10 risks and an analysis of the Teaching Staff Deployment risk.

Members found the detail on staff deployment informative and useful. Claire Foster told members that areas of staff shortage were particularly challenging for managers. Matt Smith is giving more ownership and control of staffing to managers. It was agreed that the committee would review the position on staff deployment in March 2026 to see what has changed.

A discussion took place about the risk rating of cyber vulnerability in view of the recent audit. Gareth Jones said that there was evidence to suggest that education and charities were being targeted by cyber attacks.

The committee agreed to discuss at its November meeting which area should be subject to the next deep dive which should be scheduled for March 2026.

## **7. ISO27001 ACCREDITATION AND CYBER ESSENTIALS**

Members received a report from the Director of ICT which was presented by Debbie Holland.

The report identified the differences between Cyber Essentials Plus and ISO27001 accreditation. The committee noted that the college no longer held formal ISO27001 certification but continued to align its practices with this standard.

## **8. FRAUD AND CORRUPTION REPORTING**

Debbie Holland confirmed that there was nothing to report.

## **9. KATY PRIESTLEY**

It was noted that it was Katy Priestley's last meeting of the Audit committee as she would shortly be leaving the Corporation. Katy was thanked for the contribution she had made to the work of the committee.

## **10. MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 20 November 2025.