

MINUTES OF THE SIXTY FIRST MEETING OF THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 8 FEBRUARY 2022, COMMENCING 1130.

PRESENT:

Mr S Gillespie, Committee Chair
Ms M Breslin
Mr P Canavan
Mr G Killeen
Prof M Ó'Neill

IN ATTENDANCE;

Mr L Murphy (Principal & Chief Executive)
Mr P McKeown (Finance Director)
Mr I McCartney (Internal Auditor, RSM)
Mr D Conliffe (DfE)
Ms K Beattie (NIAO)
Mrs É Doherty (Governance Secretary)

Due to restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic all members and attendees were joining the meeting via video conference.

61.1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Committee Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting had full attendance.

At the Committee Chair's request, the Committee respectively held a moments silence in memory of our dear friend, colleague and Chair of the Governing Body, Mr Gerard Finnegan (RIP).

61.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS/DECLARATIONS OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no conflict of interest declarations and no declarations of any other business.

61.3 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 2 NOVEMBER 2021**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Draft Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 2 November 2021

The Draft Minutes were taken as read and agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

PROPOSED, Mr G Killeen

SECONDED, Ms M Breslin

61.3.1 MATTERS ARISING – November 2021 Committee Meeting

The Governing Body at the meeting held on 10 November 2021 approved the following;

- 60.4** Acceptance of the Committee's Annual Report.
- 60.5** The Student Council Report & Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2021
- The Fraud and Bribery Policies
 - The Gifts, Benefactions and Donations Policy, with the proposed amendments.
- 60.7** The Annual Report & Financial Statements Year ended 31 July 2021

61.4 COMMITTEE CHAIR'S BUSINESS**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Internal Audit Review – Summary of Recommendations Progress Report – Risk Assurance Framework

Members noted the Progress Report on the Risk Assurance Framework review. The Committee Chair reported that the action relating to the Risk Appetite Statement will be discussed next on the Agenda (Item 61.5 Report 3). The other action was now complete.

The Committee Chair then invited Mr P McKeown, Finance Director to present his report to members.

61.5 MANAGEMENT REPORT, Mr P McKeown, Finance Director**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

- Report 1 Direct Award Contract Report – nil return
- Report 2 Prompt Payment – verbal report
- Report 3 Risk Management Policy – with proposed changes
- Report 3.1 Risk Management Policy (with tracked changes)

The Finance Director reported there were no Direct Award Contracts. Prompt Payment figure for 30 days to January 2022 was 97% and for the year to date from August 2021 was 96%.

The Finance Director referred to the Risk Management Policy (Report 3) together with the Risk Management Policy (with tracked changes), (Report 3.1). A few minor changes have been made to the Policy. The College's general risk appetite level is 'cautious'. Going forward the risk appetite will be considered when reviewing each risk on the Risk Register. The role of Risk Management Champion has been removed from the Policy and some of the associated duties have been incorporated into the role of the Risk Management Group. A further amendment was noted.

Mr A Mulcahy, Head of Finance is now a member of the Risk Management Group. A risk management software package is currently being considered.

Members were content to recommend approval of the amended Policy subject to the further amendment to be made.

PROPOSED, Mr P Canavan

SECONDED, Mr G Killeen

The Committee Chair thanked Mr P McKeown and invited Mr I McCartney, Internal Auditor to report to the Committee.

61.6 INTERNAL AUDIT

➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS

Report 1	Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22
Report 2	Internal Audit Review Report – Procurement & Contract Management
Report 3	Internal Audit Review Report – Safeguarding
Report 4	Internal Audit Review Report – Data Protection GDPR

The Internal Auditor referred to the Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22 which provided an update on progress against the Audit Plan and work completed to date. The audit review of Academic Framework Governance will commence in March 2022.

The Internal Auditor was pleased to report that RSM's External Quality Assessment was conducted. The outcome of the review stated that RSM have complied with the IIA's (Institute of Internal Auditors) professional standards.

The Review on Procurement and Contract Management received a satisfactory assurance rating with three low priority management actions. The actions relate to raising timely purchase orders, reporting of KPIs and the formalisation of escalation issues. Areas of good practice were identified.

The Review on Safeguarding received a satisfactory assurance rating with one low priority action related to outstanding staff Safeguarding training.

The Data Protection Policies and Procedures GDPR review is a factual report and no level of assurance was awarded. There were four low level findings as a result of this review.

The Finance Director answered a Governor request for further information on the COVID-19 Student Funding Initiatives Review.

The Committee Chair thanked Mr I McCartney and welcomed Ms K Beattie (NIAO), to report to the Committee.

61.7 EXTERNAL AUDIT**➤ PREVIOUSLY ISSUED TO ALL MEMBERS**

Report 1 Report To Those Charged With Governance 2020/21 - final

The External Auditor reported that the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2021 were certified in November 2021 with a clean audit opinion. There was one adjustment from the Draft Report previously issued to the Committee/Governing Body. This adjustment did not impact on the audit opinion. There was also one recommendation to review depreciation rates. Management will review the depreciation rates in conjunction with the Sector.

The External Auditor notified the Committee that Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) have withdrawn from sub-contract work on behalf of the NIAO. PwC provided audit services to the College and three other Colleges. The NIAO will now provide this service inhouse. The External Auditor reported there may be challenges with resourcing this work however she was comfortable that adequate resources will be available to complete the audit.

61.8 CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to note.

61.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no any other business to discuss.

61.10 RESERVED BUSINESS

Taken separately.

The Committee Chair thanked everyone and the meeting ended at 1156 and went into private session.

Mr G Killeen, Mr I McCartney and Ms K Beattie left the meeting at this juncture.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 24 May 2022

Signed: 

Mr S Gillespie, Committee Chair

Date; 24 May 2022