



NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Principles: *Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership*

Virtues: *Trust, Wisdom, Kindness, Justice, Service, Courage, Optimism*

Minutes of the Audit Committee held on Microsoft Teams on:
Tuesday 20 May 2025 at 5.00PM

PRESENT Paul Casey (Chair)
John Barnes
Father Michael Hall
David Ellis

IN ATTENDANCE: Karen Petrillo - Director of Finance and Operations
Justine Barlow - Principal
Scott Gillon – Wylie Bisset
Ade Kosoko - TIAA
Denise Hark – Clerk to Corporation

		ACTION
1.00	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP MATTERS	
1.01	Apologies for absence were received from David Robinson (TIAA).	
2.00	DECLARATION OF INTERESTS There were no declarations of interest made regarding items on the agenda.	
9.00	AOB – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM (this item is reported in the Confidential Part II Minutes) The Chair requested that this item be taken at the start of the meeting. (DE left the meeting at this point 5.30pm)	
3.00	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING	
3.01	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and are approved for signature.	
4.00	REVIEW ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING	
4.01	Re Minute 5.11: - The DFO confirmed that she had forwarded a document to committee members regarding the incident response plan.	

4.02	The DFO noted that there is no overarching method for critical systems, with different methods being used for different areas.
4.03	The IT Manager had reviewed different options and had received three different proposals which would provide more security and a quicker response time.
4.04	The IT Manager had recommended Barracuda which includes all systems and services. If there is a high risk attack the IT Manager would be called within 20 minutes. The cost of this service was £13,115. The other two quotes were £3,600 and £28,000, neither of these were deemed to be as good as Barracuda.
4.05	The DFO noted that Barracuda would provide what had been recommended by Internal Audit.
4.06	The Chair commented that 20 minutes notification period seemed a long time however, in a previous role his Network Manager had set a ransomware trap which gave a 3 or 4 minute warning which enabled swift action.
4.07	The DFO agreed to discuss this again with the IT Manager to see whether there were any options for a quicker response.
5.00	INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS
5.01	Risk Management Framework Ade Kosoko reported that the audit had provided Substantial Assurance.
5.02	The key strategic findings showed that comprehensive risk management is in place and that the strategic risk register is regularly reviewed. Mitigated controls were evidenced showing that risks were adequately monitored.
5.03	Good practice evidenced was that the Strategic Risk Register is a live document which can be updated by the Executive Team.
5.04	There were no recommendations made following this audit.
5.05	16-19 Bursary The audit had provided Reasonable Assurance.
5.06	A student bursary fund policy is in place and bursary payments are made to students in kind. Students are re-imbursed for purchases bought through the college stores but some of the reimbursements had been made without sight of a ticket. There is clear guidance in the DfE guidelines that this needs to be done.
5.07	A Bursary portal has recently been introduced. This had showed an inaccurate number of students, but this was immediately rectified during the audit. The new portal assists with maintaining confidentiality during the application process. There is also a financial support page on the College's website.
5.08	There were 4 important recommendations, and 2 low risk recommendations.

- 5.09** Funding for vulnerable groups had been incorrectly entered at £10,000 and not £15,600.
- 5.10** Issues identified included reimbursement without oversight of the ticket. There were also some students who had provided a receipt who had not been paid. This was due to the portal not reporting that there was an action which resulted a delay in students getting paid.
- 5.11** Recommendations included retention of evidence of expenditure and to speak to the developers of the portal to see if it is possible for the system to give a notification so that claims can be processed in a timely manner.
- 5.12** There were 614 discretionary bursary payments made against 634 eligible students.
- 5.13** Bank statements where bursary money is held were being reviewed.
- 5.14** It is permissible to carry over unpaid amounts for a maximum of one academic year, however, colleges must spend from the previous year before spending from the current academic year.
- 5.15** There had been discrepancies in the financial statements compared to bank statements.
- 5.16** Internal Audit had recommended that all sources of information are reviewed.
- 5.17** A low level recommendation was to issue regular reminder letters to students reminding them to claim. Each student does get a letter to say that they are eligible, however, the College should ensure that the letter is addressed to the student in the way that guidance states. AK noted that there is not enough personal detail in the letters. The College has responded that the letters will remain generic due to resource implications.
- 5.18** AK thanked the DFO and her team for their help during the audit.
- 5.19** The DFO reported that this had been a last minute audit with only two days' notice. A new system started in February with the responsibility now having moved to the Finance team. She added that a lot has been learnt from this. Following consultation with the software company a report is now run every week so that the College knows which students have submitted a receipt. Payments are now made on a weekly basis. The DFO confirmed that no payments are made without receipts. The incidents referred to in the Internal Audit report had been made by the previous team.
- 5.20** Q: How were payments dealt with previously?
A: (KP) This had been done manually with printed sheets. Students would complete an application and attach sensitive documents. This was then assessed

by staff in the Safeguarding Team. The system has solved the problems. There are now 631 students receiving the bursary.

5.21 Q: How many staff are dealing with bursaries?

A: (KP) It is split between four members of the Finance Team.

5.22 The previous system was to issue weekly payments for bus passes, now eligible students receive an annual bus pass, however, attendance for these students is closely monitored. If the students leave, the College gets a refund from the travel company.

5.23 The DFO noted that there are stringent rules on what the bursary can be spent on.

5.24 Q: Why has £200k of the funds not been spent?

A: (KP) This is a problem every year, as it is difficult to spend the money. Last year the College purchased 170 laptops. Colleges are informed that each student should be assessed according to need.

5.25 The Chair commented that it was reassuring that a detailed audit had taken place to look at the new system and asked whether the discrepancies would affect the external audit. SG replied that this is money dispersed on behalf of the ESFA; as it is an agency agreement it is not audited as part of the external audit.

5.26 The DFO reported that there would be a large reconciliation exercise which would be carried out before the audit, but this money will not be in the in-year accounts.

5.27 Q: What are the payments in kind?

A: (KP) This is the DfE terminology. It means that no cash is given to students. The college store sells items to them.

5.28 Q: Is there a margin on the items sold by the College store?

A: (KP) No. Items are sold at cost price to the College.

5.29 Q: Regarding the recommendation of a letter tailored to individual circumstances, would this be an issue if the DfE carries out an audit?

A: (KP) There are not enough resources to do this as every student would have to be looked at individually to include what subjects they are studying. Staff know the students well and are able to direct them to what is available.

5.30 Q: Would you be able to flag the system to show that a member of staff has spoken to the student on this and record the date of the conversation?

A: (JB) This could be done by Achievement Tutors. After they speak with the student they could put a flag on Cedar.

5.31 The Principal noted that eligible students were given £5 per day to spend in the canteen however, many students prefer to buy lunch from one of the local takeaways.

6.00	INTERNAL AUDIT WORK PLAN 2025-2026
6.01	The Internal Audit plan for 2025-2026 and an indicative strategy to 2028 was presented. Ade Kosoko reported that in 2025/2026 the College wanted to focus on areas of regulatory compliance.
6.02	The Internal Audit on HR originally planned for the current year has been moved to 2026/27.
6.03	An audit on Procurement is planned for 2025/2026 due to the recent change in regulations. Other areas to be included in 2025/2026 are Network Security which is an area which is heavily compliant; International Students to review actions from the Internal Audit in 2019/2020 to see whether the recommendations have been implemented, and Property Compliance/Estates. There would also be a follow-up on the previous year's audits.
6.04	2026/2027 Internal Audit would include HR arrangements, creditor and debtor payments. Admission tracking has been moved from the previous year. Absence management will also be included.
6.05	The Principal noted the short timescale for an audit of International Students as a mock audit of this area would also be undertaken by Stone King. The DFO suggested that the Internal Audit of this area be moved to October 2025.
6.06	AK agreed to amend the timescale to allow for the audit of International Students to be moved to October 2025 and to amend the scope of this audit to include looking at the follow-up of the recommendations from the audit of 2019/2020.
6.07	Agreed: That the Internal Audit plan for 2025/2026 is approved. <i>(Father Michael and Ade Kosoko left the meeting at this point – 6.24pm).</i>
7.00	EXTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS 2025/26 Scott Gillon reported on the external audit arrangements for July 2025.
7.01	There had not been any change to the audit regime and audit regulations, and there had been very little change to the College Accounts Direction which would mean that the external audit would be similar to that undertaken in the previous year.
7.02	Section 3 of the document outlined the nature and scope of the audit work and Section 3.4 detailed 5 risks which will be reviewed during the audit. It was noted that these are not college specific risks.
7.03	A detailed timetable for the audit was included in the document along with the statement of independence. It was noted that the auditors have a duty to consider that they are independent of clients.
7.04	The increased fee for the 2025 audit is based on the annual inflation rate.

7.05	SG noted that those charged with governance needed to be communicated with regularly and Section 8 requires a signature to approve the approach.	
7.06	Agreed: That the Chair of Audit signs to acknowledge the review on behalf of the Audit Committee.	
7.07	The DFO noted that page 8 referred to a defined benefit liability, however, the College currently does not have a liability. SG agreed to update this statement.	
8.00	RISK MANAGEMENT	
8.01	The updated risk register had been provided with the papers for the meeting. The Chair noted that the main addition had been discussed under the AOB item at the start of the meeting.	
8.02	The Principal commented that it was reassuring to hear the positive comments from TIAA on the risk register.	
8.03	The DFO asked committee members whether they would be open to having a risk register system rather than a spreadsheet in future. SG noted that they are a good idea and that there are a number of systems available.	
8.04	The DFO agreed to consider suitable systems and bring back recommendations to the Committee.	DFO
9.00	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	This item had been taken at the start of the meeting and is recorded in the Confidential Part II minutes.	
10.00	DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING	
10.01	The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 17 September 2025.	

The meeting at closed at 6.45pm.