



Joint Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committee – Main Minutes
Monday 25 November 2024 – 11.45am to 12.15pm

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
David Brind	Finance & General Purposes Committee Member – Chair for this meeting	DB	X	
Maria Craig	Audit Committee Chair	MC	X*	
Aneela Ali	Audit Committee Member	AA		X
Eamonn Toland	Audit Committee Member	ET	X	
Jennifer Boyle	Co-opted Audit Committee Member	JB	X	
Martin Hedley	Finance & General Purposes Committee Chair	MH		X
Darren Curry	Finance & General Purposes Committee Member	DC	X	
Dan Wallace	Finance & General Purposes Committee Member	DW	X	
David Alexander	Finance & General Purposes Committee Member	DA	X	
Victoria Beattie	Co-opted Finance & General Purposes Committee Member	VB	X	
Sarah McCourt	Co-opted Finance & General Purposes Committee Member	SM	X	
Chris Forster	Co-opted Finance & General Purposes Committee Member	CF	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Attendees				
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance & Resources	JC	X	
David Keetley	Financial Controller	DK	X	
David Hoose	Mazars – External Audit	DH	X^	
Graham Gillespie	Wylie & Bisset – Internal Audit	GG	X^	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting.

A closed session was held in advance of this meeting.

JFA/48 1. Chair's welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest

This meeting directly followed a closed session with governors only.

It was confirmed that DB would Chair the meeting in the absence of MH.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. Apologies were noted from AA and MH. The Committees **confirmed** the meeting was quorate.

The Chair asked if there were any interests to declare, however there were no interests to report. Members were reminded to highlight any relevant interests if they were to arise during the meeting.

JFA/49 2. Minutes of the last Joint Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committee 1 December 2023

The Committees **reviewed** the minutes of the previous meeting and **agreed** they were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting.

The minutes were approved.

JFA/50 3. Matters Arising / Action Log

The action log was noted, with all actions completed.

The update was noted.

JFA/51 4. Review of Strategic Risk Register

JC presented the report, noting there were no changes following presentation to the Audit Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee at their separate meetings. JC made specific reference to the financial risks which were specific to this meeting agenda.

The report was noted.

JFA/52 5. Audit Committee – Annual Report 2023/2024

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the report, noting this had been considered by the Audit Committee on 12 November 2024. Indicative text was included in anticipation of the completion of the external audit. This would be finalised ahead of presentation to the Board at the December 2024 meeting. The report provided a positive view of the control environment in place.

As per the closed session, and following discussion with the External Auditor, it was **agreed** to include an additional section regarding an area of potential weakness being identified following the year-end relating to budget controls, and that internal audit would be asked to carry out an audit of this area to highlight any lessons learned / areas to further strengthen. This area of potential weakness did not impact the overall annual opinion.

Action: NT / MC to add an area of potential weakness for review within the Audit Committee Annual Report ahead of presenting to Board.

The Audit Committee members **approved** the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2023/2024 and **noted** this would be presented to the Board as part of the Financial Statements at the December 2024 meeting.

The report was approved.

JFA/53 6. Audit Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire

JC presented the report, noting this had been considered by the Audit Committee on 12 November 2024. The draft responses had been shared with Forvis Mazars and this was being reviewed. DH provided reassurance that there were no areas of concern. The Chair of the Audit Committee suggested some additional narrative to strengthen the responses provided. **Action: NT to add in additional narrative shared by MC.**

As above, the area of potential weakness had also been identified within the Audit Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire with the reiterating that there was no consequential impact on the financial health grade, loan covenant compliance or 2023/24 financial statements.

JC noted the Board would be asked to approve this document at the December 2024 Board meeting, and for David, as CEO / Principal, and Michael, as Chair of the Board, to sign.

The Committees **recommended** the signing of the Audit Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire and **noted** this would be presented to the Board as part of the Financial Statements at the December 2024 meeting.

The report was recommended for Board approval.

JFA/54 7. Assessment of Going Concern

JC presented the report and noted as part of the 2023/24 annual accounts and financial statements final sign off, the Board were required to consider the going concern status of the College. The report noted that the College had met all bank covenants within 2023/2024 and were forecast to do so in 2024/2025. As per the ESFA Financial Health rating, the College were due to be graded Good for 2024/2025. The Board approved budget forecasted a surplus at year-end.

DH provided his assurance that he had met with the College Finance Team to understand the position and was comfortable with the assessment of going concern.

The Committees **recommended** the financial accounts to be signed off on a going concern basis.

The report was recommended for Board approval.

JFA/55 8. Draft Financial Statements 2023/2024

JC provided an overview of the reports presented.

External auditor findings report 2023/2024

JC confirmed the External Audit Report for 2023/2024 would be submitted to the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) alongside the annual accounts and financial statements.

DH noted the external audit work was substantially complete with an unqualified opinion. Of the work to complete, there was nothing of concern. The report highlighted a number of low-risk items however these had been addressed since the paper had been issued and external auditors were also aware of the potential control weakness that had arisen post the year end but stated that this had not impacted on the 2023/24 annual accounts. The report set out three minor control recommendations and the management response to these. The recommendations were similar across the sector.

The Chair of the Audit Committee confirmed the Audit Committee had discussed the College's Conflicts of Interest Policy at their November 2024 meeting and following the control recommendation within the report, had asked for additional wording to be added around the suggestion to declare if in any doubt. This additional wording was due to be approved by the Board in December 2024. The policy sought information regarding likely, perceived and confirmed conflicts, and this was to be used to create the register of interests. This did not require all interests to be recorded, only where there is likely,

perceived and confirmed conflicts of the person asked to declare and their connected persons.

The Committees **noted their thanks** to the External Audit team for their work.

The report was noted.

Gateshead College 2023/24 Annual Accounts and Financial Statements

JC presented the report noting this was a finalised draft, however some narrative was to be updated ahead of seeking Board approval. JC noted there had been no material movements from the July 2024 management accounts reported position which was reported to the Board in November 2024. A pension adjustment had been made as required.

The Committees **recommended** the Gateshead College annual accounts and financial statements for Board approval at the December 2024 meeting.

Action: JC to finalise narrative within the document ahead of seeking Board approval.

The report was recommended for Board approval.

Gateshead College Foundation Annual Accounts and Financial Statements 2023/2024

JC presented the report, noting that following approval from this Committee, the Gateshead College Foundation Board would be asked to sign the accounts ahead of the Gateshead College Board on 11 December 2024. These accounts were consolidated within the overall Gateshead College accounts.

The Committees **recommended** the Gateshead College Foundation annual accounts and financial statements for approval by the Gateshead College Foundation Board.

The report was recommended for Gateshead Foundation Board approval.

North East Apprenticeship Company (NEAC) Annual Accounts and Financial Statements 2023/2024

JC presented the report, noting that following approval from this Committee, the NEAC Board would be asked to sign the accounts ahead of the Gateshead College Board on 11 December 2024. These accounts were consolidated within the overall Gateshead College accounts.

The Committees **recommended** the NEAC annual accounts and financial statements for approval by the NEAC Board.

The report was recommended for NEAC Board approval.

JFA/56 9. Any Other Business

Internal Audit 2023/2024

GG noted his thanks for all those involved with the internal audits during 2023/2024, noting that documentation requests had been responded to promptly and there was effective engagement with management. The Committee **noted their thanks** to the Internal Audit team for their work.

The update was noted.

JFA/57 10. Date of the next meeting

The dates of the next meetings were as follows:

- Audit Committee – Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 4pm
- Finance and General Purposes Committee – Friday 14 March 2025 at 9am