



## Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date:** 3 March 2026  
**Time:** 16:00-17:30  
**Location:** A325, Old Mill Lane

### Attendance

Matt Mills (MM)  
 Ethan Sumner (ES)\*  
 Leon Etherington (LE)  
 Stacey Ledger (SL)  
 Jo Mallows (JM)  
 Emma Dawson (ED)  
 Sue Hutchinson (SHu)\*  
 Aaron Macdonald (AM)  
 Michael Wood (MW)\*  
 Jean-Paul Lawrence (JPL)  
 Hayley Allsopp (HA)  
 Jason Barnard (JB)  
 Tony Johnson (TJ)  
 Laila Lawton (LL)  
 Azhar Iqbal (AIq)  
 Stephen Hepworth (SH)  
 Jessica Melling (JMe)

### Role

Board Governor and Audit and Risk Committee Chair  
 Co-opted Audit and Risk Committee Member  
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 Co-opted Audit and Risk Committee Member  
 Board Governor and Audit and Risk Committee Member  
 Co-opted Audit and Risk Committee Member  
 Menzies  
 RSM  
 AoC  
 Vice Principal Partnerships and Growth  
 Vice Principal - Curriculum and Student Experience  
 Executive Director of MIS  
 Vice Principal - Corporate Services  
 Chief Financial Officer  
 Director of IT  
 ITS Managing Director  
 Director of Governance

### Apologies

Carley Speechley (CS)  
 Gavin Batty (GB)  
 Annalee Hurley (AH)

### Role

Board Governor and Audit and Risk Committee Member  
 Deputy CEO  
 Menzies

\*joined online

Procedural Matters	
<p><b>1. Quoracy</b>            MM noted that the meeting was not quorate at the start time of the meeting, therefore approval items would be discussed once quorum was achieved. LE joined the meeting at 16:15, at which point the meeting was quorate. All decision items were commenced after this time.</p>	
<p><b>2. Apologies for absence</b>            Apologies were received from CS and GB.</p>	
<p><b>3. Declarations of Interest</b>            No interests were declared.</p>	
<p><b>4. Register of Interest</b>            It was noted that an update was needed for ED.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> JM to update ED ROI.</p>

The register of interest was noted.	
<b>5. Minutes of the last meeting held on 3 December 2025 for approval</b> It was <b>RESOLVED</b> to <b>APPROVE</b> the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
<b>6. Matters Arising</b> There were no matters arising.	
<b>7. Rolling Action List</b> JMe updated that the due date on the action on Governor training had been extended to allow further exploration into the subject. All other actions were noted as complete or contained within the agenda.	
<b>8. Assurance Based Governance</b> JMe noted that the assurance governance framework had been updated based on meeting discussions to date and the current agenda.	
<b>9. Notification of items of any other business</b> No requests for any other business were shared during the meeting. It was noted that prior to the meeting an item of DfE audit notification had been submitted.	
<b>Risk Management and Health and Safety</b>	
<b>10. New Risk Review</b> The Committee identified the following potential areas of new risk and noted consideration should be given to them during the upcoming internal audit planning process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implications of the SEND white paper</li> <li>• Digital Transformation</li> <li>• Northern College Integration</li> <li>• Lifelong Learning Entitlement</li> </ul>	
<b>11. Health and Safety Update</b> TJ talked to the paper shared with the committee which highlighted the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Health and Safety Policy was reviewed and approved by governors in November 2025.</li> <li>• There have been 46 accidents year to date. This compares with 38 year to date last year. The rolling 12 month total number of accidents is 72.</li> <li>• There have been 6 near misses to date compared to 21 this time last year.</li> <li>• Four accidents are reportable under RIDDOR compared to a year to date figure of 5 last year.</li> </ul>	

- All fire risk assessments have been completed, with actions notified to the relevant departments for timely implementation and compliance with safety regulations.
- A lockdown in September 2025 was managed effectively, and drills have been completed at all sites.
- A Health and Safety Management Meeting has been introduced which brings together key stakeholders to report on and review critical health and safety matters.
- Sample audits have been undertaken on the Aptem system (apprenticeships) and Navigate (work and industry placements) with all records compliant with vetting requirements.
- Five departments are having stress action plans implemented as a proactive way to prevent stressors building up.

Discussion explored the implications of the HSE guidance to not wear gloves when using hand tools. It was noted that not using gloves when using hand tools resulted in 17% of accidents within the Construction department. The Committee challenged the College on the position to follow HSE guidance, and it was noted that the College would not move away from following the HSE guidance, as they are the subject experts. It was noted that the frequency of accidents is expected to decrease over time as students become more familiar with using the tools.

It was clarified that the sixth form is classed as a high-risk area due to the use of chemicals and radioactive materials.

TJ reflected that he is confident that Health and Safety practices are being applied, reporting is encouraged, including near misses and this is resulting in an increased number of reports being submitted. It was noted that no underlying reasons or cause for concern have been identified.

TJ shared that a new lockdown system called Alertus is being implemented and allows for different systems for different buildings, supporting the Barnsley College multi-campus model. This system covers lockdowns, bomb threats and armed intruders. JM questioned the approach to a lockdown if students were outside of a building. TJ noted that the response and lockdown depends on what triggers the need for a lockdown and highlighted that every incident is likely to have unique factors. It was noted that dynamic risk assessments are completed and to

avoid a delay in response to an incident, the decision making on response is delegated to those closest to the incident. It was highlighted that repetitive refresher training is completed to support the execution of lockdowns.

The committee commended the executive on the speed of lockdowns achieved during testing.

The Committee questioned how the lockdown protocols are shared with students. It was noted that the run,hide,tell protocol is part of the mandatory student induction and is also reinforced through pastoral staff.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and the assurance it provides against objective 2.11 – “The college is meeting and aiming to exceed its statutory responsibilities for Health and Safety”.

**12. Cyber Risk, Mitigations and AI Strategy**

AIq joined the meeting at 16:23.

AIq gave a presentation to the Committee covering the College’s cyber risks, mitigation, prevention and recovery.

LE noted that in his capacity as Link Governor for GDPR, AI and Security, he would be exploring this in more detail with AIq.

The committee explored the simulation approaches undertaken by the College. It was noted that the desktop exercises conducted by the College have helped make improvements to security measures. These tests will be re-run with the new tools and systems in place. AIq also noted that phishing simulation tests are included with the Microsoft license and a solution which is responsive and links to training should individuals not detect the attack simulation is being explored.

The Committee questioned the current completion rate of mandatory cyber-security training, stressing its importance as the first line of defence. AIq noted that current completion is ~98% and is regularly monitored. It was highlighted that this also forms part of the mandatory induction process for new starters in the College. AIq talked to future plans to enhance the training and adapt it to individuals.

The Committee questioned the College's approach to network segmentation. AIq explained that the College run VLANS and so separate out key systems.

The split between in house and external expertise reliance for cyber was questioned. AIq explained that the College work collaboratively with the managed services which have been procured. He also explained that there are security specialists within the College staff team, and therefore internal expertise in this area is strong.

It was noted that the College operate largely through Microsoft 365 and therefore the College operates mainly through SAAS solutions, with only 3 on premises systems.

The Committee questioned if a FinOps assessment had been undertaken on the cybersecurity costs. AIq explained that this is not currently something that has been done and that cybersecurity investment is increasing within the College to ensure appropriate risk management and mitigations are in place.

It was highlighted that the MDR contract is an annual contract, affording the College agility and that the backup and disaster recovery system contract is for 3 yrs. The organisations are worked with collaboratively.

AIq cited end-users as his main cause for concern relating to cyber security, explaining that mitigations are in place to address vulnerabilities in the technology.

AIq explained that the College currently has the Cyber Essentials certification and is exploring Cyber Essentials Plus. It was noted there are ongoing conversations regarding how the certification can be adapted to the education setting. AIq flagged that the certification allows the College to identify key management steps and areas for consideration. AIq noted the important action the College will be taking to explore and understand its supply chain and their certification status regarding cyber security.

The challenges around multi-factor authentication caused by digital poverty and potential restrictions on access to technology were raised.

<p>AIq highlighted that significant advancements are being made on the dark web regarding AI software designed to conduct cyber-attacks. This poses a risk to organisations.</p> <p>The Committee noted that cyber remains the highest inherent and residual risk area on the BAF.</p> <p>The committee thanked AIq for his presentation. AIq left the meeting at 16:50.</p>	
<b>Link Governor Reports</b>	
<p><b>13. Completed Link Governor Reports</b></p> <p>MM highlighted that link visits had been completed in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI, SEND and 14-16</li> <li>• Health and Safety</li> <li>• Cyber, IT and GDPR</li> <li>• Student Experience and Voice</li> <li>• Safeguarding and PREVENT</li> </ul> <p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b> the assurance the reports provide the Committee on the action the College is taking to meet its statutory duties. It was confirmed that the Link Governor reports would also be shared with the Board.</p> <p>JM highlighted that she received significant assurance of the quality of the work and the proactive nature of the work in EDI and SEND during her Link Governor visit.</p> <p>It was noted that the College will need to ensure it remains aware of progress with the SEND reform and assesses it's readiness for this. The potential emergence of risks linked to mental health and community sport were this were noted as potential consideration areas.</p> <p>It was noted that a paper will be shared with the Board regarding student voice and feedback from the strategic seminar. This will start the process of allowing a 'you said we did' approach to student feedback being implemented.</p>	
<b>Board Assurance</b>	
<p><b>14. Board Assurance Framework</b></p> <p>TJ talked to the paper provided to the Committee which provides an update on the management of the BAF at Q2. The report highlighted the following points:</p>	

- Cyber security threat remains high, with many educational organisations continuing to be targeted by cyber criminals, some of whom are state sponsored.
- At the College, the volume of cyber attacks remains significant, including phishing attempts and ransomware attacks. A number of mitigations have been implemented to maintain a robust cyber-security posture.
- An enhanced recovery solution has been procured which allows for faster restoration of services in line with the recovery time objective of critical IT systems.
- A Director of AI Integration has been appointed. Their initial focus will be on service departments, however their ongoing work will help reduce the residual impact of the risk relating to the College failing to utilise modern technology and take advantage of the benefits it offers to enhance the student and staff experience.
- Positive improvements have been seen in apprenticeship service rating by employers and achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes.
- 4 minor snag issues remain on the Barnsley College University Centre work list. There is a delay in completion of phase 2, however cost is expected to be within the planned budget.
- The College continues to participate in a number of national CPD programmes for English and Maths staff in 2025 /26 which will further improve our students' experience and outcomes.
- 16-18 recruitment for the 2025/26 academic year increased against target.
- The 14 -16 provision continues to be stable with improved student experience as a result of the move to Eastgate.
- A Director of Inclusion has recently been appointed and will have a specific remit around 14 -16, supporting the growth of elective home education students and infills across the College.
- The College continues to develop robust compliance activities in line with the DfE and funding body requirements and manage subcontractors in line with the DfE Subcontractor Standard.
- There is a high level of confidence at Q2 that the finances will significantly exceed the budget for the year.

The Committee highlighted the priority emphasis that should be placed on digital transformation and recognised the important role the new Director of AI Integration has to play in this. It was requested that a presentation be provided to the Committee following the new Director starting which talks to the BAF and provides assurance against the College’s approach to risk mitigation regarding digital transformation. The Committee highlighted the desire to understand what the new Director had identified as their priority areas of focus and their risks and mitigating actions. It was noted that the post holder will work to understand the relationship between Cyber and IT infrastructure, digital transformation and AI integration.

A potential risk of global chip shortages was raised. TJ noted this would be shared with AIq. It was flagged that switching to use of technology with different chips often requires legacy software to be upgraded, which has financial implications.

The Committee **NOTED** the Board Assurance Framework and **APPROVED** the assurance it provides against objective 4.1, regularity and proprietary requirements – risk management.

**Action:** JPL to work with the new Director of AI Integration to prepare a presentation to the Committee for September on the priorities within digital transformation, the risks and how mitigation is applied to these to provide assurance against the BAF.

**Finance**

**15. Cashless Operation Update**

LL noted the report had been produced following a request of the Committee at the last meeting to understand the volume of cash transactions in the College and consider if becoming a cashless College is feasible.

The report highlighted the following points:

- Cash takings are received from 3 main areas and account for ~18% of transactions
  - College catering operations
  - College commercial operations (predominantly Wigfield Farm and the Open Kitchen)
  - Student payments in curriculum admin offices
- Moving to a cashless College is possible but would involve significant planning and implementation of additional software and applications.
- Student feedback on the proposal to move to cashless operation was predominantly negative. Students raised concerns regarding lack of access to bank accounts and the reliance on others to top up online accounts.
- Students raised concerns regarding reliability of systems and access.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small number of students did see some benefits including quicker payments and less need to carry cash, however on the whole these benefits did not outweigh the risks.</li> </ul> <p>LL explained that moving to cashless operation is not feasible based on student feedback. However, some action is being taken to reduce the amount of cash taken, including the addition of payment options on online platforms and the development of an online shop.</p> <p>The Committee questioned the current approach to education on cash management. HA explained that this is provided as part of tutorial, however the time spent on the topic of financial management is limited by the number of areas which are covered in tutorial. It was noted that feedback from students indicated that they would like more financial education. It was noted the curriculum review may support this.</p> <p>ES noted his position as an employee of Barclays. It was noted that a number of banks have education arms who provide content to students. HA noted that the College had worked with banks in the past to deliver this to students.</p> <p>The Committee recommended that LL cyclically review opportunities for organic reduction in cash transactions.</p> <p>The Committee recognised that the decision to move to cashless operation or not is a management decision, however expressed their support for the current decision not to move to a complete cashless organisation.</p>	
<p><b>16. New Financial Controls</b></p> <p>LL talked to the report provided to the Committee, which highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 control actions were identified, with 5 having been completed to date. All other controls are in progress either pending development, release of further information, or aligning with the policy review cycle.</li> <li>• The adult learner loan onboarding progress is being reviewed ahead of the 2026/27 academic year.</li> <li>• An annual funding rules session will be delivered to all budget holders across the College group, the finance team and all those in MIS roles from the 2026/27 academic year.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> LL to report on completion of new financial control actions in December 2026.</p>

<p>This will be informed by the funding rules published by the DfE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An annual funding update is delivered to all MIS Administrators prior to the start of year, which will include conditions of funding for Advanced Learner Loans and use of student recruitment agencies.</li> <li>• A statement regarding use of learner find organisations for student recruitment will be included in the next iteration of the subcontracting and tuition fee policies.</li> <li>• Performance reviews and business planning will review staff qualifications within ITS in March.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee questioned the source of contracts. SH confirmed that the majority of contracts used in the past have been developed internally. It was confirmed that where contracts are standard terms, these are checked.</p> <p>It was requested that a further update be provided on progress against actions at the December Audit and Risk Committee meeting.</p>	
<b>Audit</b>	
<p><b>17. Internal Audit Progress Report</b></p> <p>AM talked to the audit progress report highlighting the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since the last Committee meeting, 2 reports have been issued as final with substantial assurance opinions being issued: Estates and Facilities Management - Regulatory Compliance and Curriculum Planning.</li> <li>• All fieldwork dates for the 2025/26 internal audit plan have been agreed and dates for the scoping calls have also been agreed.</li> <li>• All fieldwork will be completed by the end of the academic year.</li> <li>• The Head of Internal Audit Opinion will be provided at the first meeting of the 2026/27 academic year.</li> </ul> <p>AM talked to the Further Education - benchmarking of internal audit findings 2024/25 report shared with the Committee. He highlighted that the report provides assurance on the positive performance of Barnsley College during internal audits. AM noted that consideration of the thematic findings in the report are key as they provide a tool for sense checking of actions and controls. It also provides prompts for new risks to be considered.</p>	

<p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b> the internal audit progress report and the Further Education - benchmarking of internal audit findings 2024/25 report.</p>	
<p><b>18. Estates and Facilities Management Internal Audit Report</b> AM talked to the completed internal audit report, highlighting the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A substantial assurance internal audit opinion was provided meaning the Board can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the College relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, mitigated, consistently applied and effective.</li> <li>• The college has established and implemented processes to support estates and facilities regulatory compliance.</li> <li>• External procedures, including the Department for Education’s Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) guidance, are being applied in practice to inform and structure compliance activity.</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined through up-to-date job descriptions, and both compliance trackers and asset registers are being actively used to monitor statutory requirements and evidence completion of maintenance and safety checks.</li> <li>• Two low priority management actions were identified. These relate to ensuring consistent retention of contractor certification and formalising the governance reporting to support clearer oversight. Both have due dates of 31 March 2026.</li> <li>• Two advisory actions were agreed. These relate to formalising procedures through internal guidance documents to support and complement the GEMS framework and exploring the implementation of an automated compliance tracker that integrates with the asset register to streamline monitoring.</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that follow up on completion of actions will be provided in due course.</p> <p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b> the assurance provided by the Internal Audit report.</p>	
<p><b>19. Curriculum Planning Internal Audit Report</b> AM talked to the completed internal audit report, highlighting the following points:</p>	

- A substantial assurance internal audit opinion was provided meaning the Board can take substantial assurance that the controls upon which the College relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, mitigated, consistently applied and effective.
- It was confirmed that the College has a robust and well-structured curriculum planning framework in place which is aligned to its strategic objectives and national priorities.
- The audit found that processes for planning, stakeholder engagement, scrutiny, and governance are comprehensive and consistently applied across departments.
- The audit highlighted that while the integration of AI into curriculum plans is at an early stage, the College has established a clear strategic direction and supporting initiatives.
- One low category action has been agreed with management relating to updating departmental templates to include AI and emerging technologies to further strengthen alignment with future skills needs.

HA confirmed that the College was currently undertaking its business planning process, during which presentations must include departments intended use of AI and how this will support departmental development. It was also noted that consideration of use of AI had been added to the curriculum planning documentation which has been rolled out.

The Committee **NOTED** the assurance provided by the Internal Audit report.

### **20. South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) Audit Report**

JB talked to the paper provided to the Committee, noting the following points:

- The College underwent a SYMCA audit for its devolved adult contracts, including the Free Courses for Jobs (FCfJ) and Adult Skills Funding (ASF) in November 2025.
- The audit included a random sample of 45 learners, examining 120 individual enrolments
- The audit report was shared at the end of January 2026.
- The audit did not result in any funding clawback but made some procedural recommendations, which are being considered /reviewed.

- The overall outcome awarded was - Effective internal controls are in place.
- Some minor errors were identified, however they were not related to funding/eligibility and no follow up action is required by SYMCA.

JB noted that this is the first SYMCA audit the College have been subject to, although ITS had one in October 2024. The audit process is annual and ITS are expecting another one in spring 2026. It was explained that the audit focuses on compliance and quality.

The College are working with SYMCA to understand what the 5 key recommended actions mean in practice to allow action to be taken against these. It was highlighted that some actions are for contract managers as SYMCA are pushing themselves to give providers more clarity on what is expected.

The Committee questioned the implications of the Northern College merger on this. It was noted that Northern College had a combined audit undertaken by Mazars on behalf of SYMCA, WYCA and the DfE ~18 months ago. Barnsley College have access to this and will be working with the funding providers to gain clarity on the actions.

The Committee **NOTED** the assurance the audit and report provides against objective 2.5.

### **21. Clerks Monitoring of Audit Recommendations**

JMe talked to the report provided to the Committee highlighting the following:

- The format of the report has been updated to include all actions from the last year and the current year internal and external audits. This is to provide consistency of reporting and easier oversight of actions.
- The audit actions shown in red have been included but not commented on as the report was only presented to Committee at the current meeting. These will be updated with commentary from the next meeting.
- There are currently 2 actions past planned completion date:
  - Project management IoT – completion is currently blocked by change of roles. Expected completion date changed from 31/5/2025 to 31/03/2026.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Key Financial Controls – External consultancy is required to produce the report and although instructed this has not yet been delivered. Expected completion date changed from 31/10/2025 to 31/3/2026</li> </ul> <p>It was suggested that the report be shared in excel format for future meetings.</p> <p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b> the report and the assurance it provides.</p>	
<b>Any Other Business</b>	
<p><b>22. DfE Audit Notification</b></p> <p>JB updated the Committee that the College have received notification that we have been selected for a DfE audit on free meals and 16-19 bursaries.</p> <p>He shared that the audit window is 24 and 25 March 2026 and noted that the DfE will be on site to complete this.</p>	
<b>Meet With Auditors Without Management</b>	
<p><b>23. Meet With Auditors Without Management</b></p> <p>HA, TJ, JPL, LL, JB and SH left the meeting at 17:36.</p> <p>The Committee met with the internal and external auditors without management.</p> <p>The meeting was closed at 17:45</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> AM to explore risks associated with Lifelong Learning Entitlement and feedback to the Committee.</p>
<p><b>24. Date of Next Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuesday 9 June 2026 – 4-5:30PM – A325.</li> </ul>	

