

University of York
Audit and Risk Committee

Matters for note by the University Council at its meeting on 27 November 2024 arising from the meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2024

1. The Vice-Chancellor reported on national political developments as they pertained to HE; the re-basing of student numbers and the current recruitment round; the ongoing cost management exercise and plans to return to sustainable surpluses; the possibility of further industrial action; aspects of the Changing the Work project; **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]** The Committee also commented on the University's performance in the most recent National Student Survey and the importance of developing appropriate KPIs for Council in respect of staff morale and wellbeing in the context of the outcome from the recent Voluntary Severance scheme.
2. In considering its own Terms of Reference and membership (as it was the first meeting of the new academic year), the Committee asked the University Secretary to consider the best means of undertaking a light-touch review of the Committee in the context of the Council effectiveness review which was currently in train. It also noted the poor gender balance in its current membership and asked the University Secretary and CFOO to review the nature and number of University officers in attendance at its meetings.
3. The Committee considered its draft schedule of business for 2024/25 and also proposed topics for periodic assurance reports at its three meetings in the period February-July 2025. The Chair reported that that he wished to move towards a situation in which the assurance reports fell into one of three types: (i) reports covering the areas on which it was required to provide a formal annual assurance opinion to Council; (ii) reports providing a "shallow dive" into one of the top-level corporate risks (to be presented by the relevant risk-owner); or (iii) reports on other aspects of risk mitigation and assurance. It was reported that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) had already agreed to present a shallow-dive into the Student Mental Health Risk at the next meeting based on the further detail provided in the full Corporate Risk Register and that the proposed assurance report on league tables from the Director of Strategic Planning & Performance was agreed for the meeting in February 2025.
4. The Committee considered an update from the IT Director on cyber security and implementation of recommendations arising from a recent internal audit of Data Management. It was noted that going forward UEB would receive quarterly Cyber Security Reports on recent attacks and compromises across the sector while the Information Security Board (ISB) received 'lessons learned' presentations from colleagues at other institutions, demonstrating the increased willingness across the sector to collaborate against cyber threats. In this context it was noted that the use of managed devices by staff had been increased from 55% to 92% and that the University would continue to monitor and improve the completion rate of mandated staff training on data security as well as continuing the simulated phishing attacks to identify colleagues who might be in need of greater support and guidance. As regards issues of business continuity, there was a focus on identifying and protecting the key systems and databases (the "crown jewels") required for maintaining core University activity.
5. The Committee considered a verbal update on Risk Management (RM), noting that a more comprehensive update would be provided to the next meeting. The Director of Strategic Planning and Performance reported that work was ongoing with the University Secretary and the CFOO to implement the broad direction of travel on RM endorsed by UEB in April 2024, including greater agility, sharpening of risk descriptors and distinguishing between risk and performance management. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**
6. The Committee considered the annual assurance report on data quality as it related to the statutory returns submitted by the University to external bodies, noting that as different data returns were compiled by different units across the University, some aspects of the report remained to be validated by the owners of those returns. It welcomed the intention to implement earlier than the target date (December 2025) a recent internal audit recommendation to improve institutional oversight of data returns by establishing an External Returns Steering Committee. The Committee observed that such a group could take the lead on introducing higher levels of automation to ensure data consistency and reduce the required staff effort/time (consistent with the Changing the Work project). As it had previously advised, the University should also continue to push back through sector organisations such as the Russell Group and UUK against the high volume of data returns required by different external agencies, noting the issues which had occurred in the national Data Futures project led by HESA.

7. The Committee considered a progress report against the 2023/24 and 2024/25 internal audit plans, noting that one review remained to be completed in the 2023/24 plan (Appeals Handling) while scoping and initial fieldwork had commenced for the first reviews in the 2024/25 plan. It was noted that seven audit actions (one high risk) were currently overdue and five other actions had been granted deadline extensions by UEB, in some cases due to organisational or staffing changes (e.g. staff departures under VS). The Committee observed that, as it had previously requested, efforts should be made to distribute internal audit work/reporting more evenly across the year to avoid an accumulation of reports coming to the same meeting.
8. The Committee considered a verbal progress report on the external audit of the 2023/24 financial statements, noting that there had been good progress at the first site visit and, with better than previously anticipated year-end numbers, there was likely to be improved covenant head-room and a higher materiality level. Matters remaining to be considered included the classification of joint ventures, pension assets and the loan evaluation, but no major issues were currently anticipated. It was also reported that background work had commenced on the Going Concern assessment which would be finalised once the full student recruitment outcome for was confirmed and the Q1 forecast completed.
9. The Committee received for information the annual report from the Finance Department setting out internal and external audit fees during 2023/24 as well as details of any non-audit services provided (e.g. taxation advice). Additional data was also reported verbally in respect of payments to Grant Thornton for audit over-runs (£59k) and to Ernst & Young for loan notes valuation (£45k).

October 2024
DAVID WATSON
Chair, Audit & Risk Committee

University of York
Audit and Risk Committee

Matters for note by the University Council at its meeting on 27 November 2024 arising from the meeting of the Committee held on 12 November 2024

1. The Chair reported that Mr Smith Van Carroll had resigned from the Committee due to the pressure of his other professional commitments. During the process to identify and recruit a replacement member, the Committee would need to ensure it maintained its 50% quoracy level at meetings.
2. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor presented the Vice-Chancellors' overview report, drawing particular attention to the recent award of the 2024 Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences to alumnus Daron Acemoğlu, the HE sector's ongoing financial difficulties and the status of the current student recruitment cycle [**MATERIAL REDACTED**].
3. The University Secretary reported that, as a review of Council effectiveness was currently in train, a review of the Committee would follow from that to avoid potential duplication of effort.
4. The Committee considered its schedule of business for 2024/25 including the topics previously agreed for periodic assurance reports. As regards the scheduled assurance report on legal compliance in July 2025, the Committee observed that, as there was believed to have been a recent report to UEB on this matter (to be confirmed), this topic might usefully be replaced by a report on the work in progress to further develop the University's approach to business continuity, and the University Secretary was therefore asked to consider this possibility.
5. The Committee considered the updated Corporate Risk Register (CRR), noting that two of the risks in the 'Treat' category (Funding the University Strategy and Overseas Student Recruitment) had been discussed as part of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's report while the third (Student Mental Health/Wellbeing) was the subject of a separate 'shallow dive' report (see para 7 below). [**MATERIAL REDACTED**].
6. The Committee considered the updated Risk Appetite Statement for approval by Council, noting that since the Statement's last iteration there had been some changes in the appetite level adopted in some areas to reflect work that was complete or ongoing; changes had also been introduced in the wording of certain definitions and the Statement re-ordered to show the strategic risks first. The Committee welcomed the work currently in train on the alignment and interconnection between risk appetite, target risk scores and resource gaps but observed that the language and level of some of the definitions around specific risks might need to be revisited to provide a more nuanced presentation. Given these observations, it was agreed not to submit the Statement to the next Council meeting with only partial endorsement from the Committee but rather for the CFOO to provide a verbal update to Council on the work in progress to further develop the Statement.
7. The Committee considered a report on the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Risk from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) and the Interim Academic Registrar, noting that an important mitigation against this risk had been to reduce the assessment burden on students. It was reported that following the recent departure from the University of the Director of Student Life and Wellbeing and the addition of student support to the portfolio of the Director of Library, Learning, Archives and Wellbeing, a Retention and Wellbeing Review had been launched to ensure that student support services were well-connected and easy to access. The merger of the former YUSU and GSA into a single students' union would also help to deliver clearer sign-posting to the correct support services, noting that often what was required was additional academic rather than mental health support. Specialist support services in the areas of disability, mental health and sexual violence had been protected when making VS decisions while draft Terms of Reference were currently being drawn up for an internal audit of student mental health/wellbeing, the outcome from which would inform a refresh of the Student Wellbeing Strategy. It was noted that the increasing rate of students declaring disabilities arose in part from greater awareness of support services but also from the diversity of the University's portfolio. The planned Wellbeing Review would be strongly focused on simplifying the signposting to different support services and would also identify any duplication of activity, review the pastoral role of academic supervisors and establish clear boundaries with externally provided health support (e.g. from the NHS). The University's response to the Abrahart Case judgement included managing risks around staff awareness of students in distress and having sufficient training to respond appropriately, including in cases where students had not come forward themselves to seek support. The rising number of students seeking mental health support was a sector-wide trend with a number of different underlying factors such as loss of learning in schools during the Covid pandemic,

reduction in the stigma previously attached to mental health issues and other aspects of the broader student experience. Closer monitoring of student attendance and engagement facilitated earlier and more proactive support for students in need which also contributed to student retention; enhanced data analytics bringing together different data sources could also play an important role. Given the importance of this area and its current risk rating, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Academic Registrar were asked to provide a further update to the Committee in a year's time.

8. The Committee considered a report on Value for Money (VfM) assurance from the University Secretary, noting that although it was a good practice recommendation in the CUC Audit Code (2020) that university audit committees should provide annual assurance to their governing bodies on VfM, this was not deemed to be a high priority matter, a view supported by UEB. It was agreed that, as universities provided value in many diverse ways, VfM was difficult to assess and summarise in a single annual report and might be better viewed holistically by drawing on a suite of existing VfM-related information as presented to the Committee and Council over the course of a year. There were also definitional difficulties as regards identifying the beneficiaries of VfM who might be, for example, the University itself, students, wider society, research funders etc. The Committee **approved the recommendation** to discontinue the VfM annual report and in future years to consider a brief assurance statement from the Chair, CFOO and University Secretary, noting that this decision was consistent with the 'Changing the Work' (CtW) programme. On the basis of the University Secretary's paper, a process note would be drafted setting out the new arrangement which could be provided on request to clarify the University's agreed approach to this matter and support any VfM-related queries
9. The Committee considered the Health and Safety (H&S) Annual Report 2023/24, noting that the current Director of H&S had joined the University in March 2024 and aimed to maintain the momentum of improvements instigated by his predecessor who had recently left under VS. Fire safety remained a key priority with a new team in place that was driving improvements in areas such as Fire Risk Assessments and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans. Staff training was key in the H&S area and needed to be matched to the responsibilities of different roles. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**. A current review of H&S training programmes was being supported by the recent move of the H&S Office from DTEF into Human Resources, which provided better access to support from the University's central staff training unit; it was hoped that in due course more basic safety courses might be mandated with appropriate sanctions for non-completion, an initiative that was being driven through HR and supported by the Faculty Deans. The change in the risk appetite rating for the H&S Risk from 'averse' to 'minimal' was based on compliance with UK H&S standards and intended to prevent prohibition of certain research activities. As the well-structured Annual Report provided considerable assurance as to the University's approach to H&S management, **the Committee decided to endorse the Director's overarching assurance statement and the onwards submission of the report to Council.**
10. The Committee considered the Prevent Duty Annual Report 2023/24, noting that the ongoing conflict in Israel/Gaza and associated student encampment on campus had provided the backdrop for much of the Prevent-related activity over the year, with the University focused on maintaining its ethos of being a community of enquiry committed to freedom of speech within the law. Take-up of Prevent training continued to be good and would be extended to more student-facing staff with together with refresher training for the senior leaders who had specific responsibilities under the Home Office guidance. **The Committee decided to endorse the Prevent Duty Annual Report 2023/24 for onwards submission to Council.**
11. The Committee considered a progress report against the 2023/24 and 2024/25 internal audit plans, noting that finalisation of the International Student Recruitment Agents review completed the 2023/24 audit plan. Follow-up work had confirmed 61 open actions, 14 of which were overdue. It was noted that the increased number of overdue actions arose from staff departures under VS and other organisational changes; the matter had also been noted by UEB and would be addressed in the ongoing handover of responsibility for internal audit from Finance to the University Secretary. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.
12. The Committee considered the Internal Audit Annual Report and assurance opinion 2023/24, noting that over the year there had been 10 audits which had produced 2 high-risk, 19 medium-risk and 16 low-risk findings; the overarching opinion based on these findings was 'reasonable/moderate assurance' (the second opinion type after 'substantial assurance'). The two high-risk findings related to Financial Controls (Accounts Payable) and Faculty Financial/Operational Controls (Purchasing and Inventory Management), neither of which were deemed to be pervasive issues across the University's control environment. The Committee welcomed the report and asked the internal auditors to submit it to the joint meeting with the Finance Committee on 16 December 2024 at which the 2023/24 annual accounts would be considered.

13. The Committee considered a verbal progress report on the external audit of the 2023/24 financial statements, noting that fieldwork was currently ongoing. As regards Going Concern assessment and covenant review, the most recent budget and cost savings programme had been subject to high-level review, with no concerns at the present time. The evaluation of the University's loan notes had been successfully completed in accordance with the audit plan and timeline while good progress had also been made as regards research grant income and pension assumptions. The audit by *Azets* of subsidiary companies was ongoing, with one company (*York Sports Village*) being exempt from an audit as it was in the process of being liquidated. The Committee welcomed confirmation that the audit process was currently on track and encouraged the auditors to alert the Chair and the Treasurer as soon as possible to any issues or concerns which might arise.

November 2024
DAVID WATSON
Chair, Audit & Risk Committee

University of York
Audit and Risk Committee

Matters for note by the University Council at its meeting on 26 February 2025 arising from the meeting of the Committee held on 14 February 2025

1. Arising from the minutes of its last meeting, the University Secretary reported that recruitment of new members to the Committee would follow the current recruitment of new Council members and that Prevent Duty arrangements and requirement were discussed and monitored in a multi-agency group for the North East of England.
2. The Committee considered an update report on campus fire safety from the Directors of Estates and Health & Safety, **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.
3. With regard to review of the Committee's own effectiveness, the University Secretary reported that a group comprising himself, the Chair, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the CFOO and one volunteer lay member of Council (Abisola Barber) would take a light-touch approach to considering the matter and developing suitable recommendations for consideration. The Constitution and Nominations Committee would also be asked to formalise the practice of individuals chairing Council sub-committees for a maximum of two three-year terms.
4. It was reported that the Committee's action-schedule would be rationalised by deletion or amalgamation of some items. As regards the long-standing action relating to development of an online policy register, the CFOO reported that while management effort was currently focused on more pressing immediate priorities this project would be picked up over the next 12 months through changes in the planning process that sought to reduce the policy burden by separating out guidance documents from formally embedded policies. Regarding the scheduled periodic assurance report on legal compliance/contracts, this would be picked up in the following year's internal audit programme and would therefore be replaced in July 2025 by consideration of a progress report on the review of the Risk Management System (RMS) which was about to start. As the University's contracts framework was currently under review, a periodic assurance report on the legal aspects of the framework might be scheduled for the Committee's meeting in September 2025
5. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor presented the Vice-Chancellors' overview report, drawing particular attention to the current financial challenges facing the sector and the University's response. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.
6. The Committee considered the updated Corporate Risk Register (CRR), noting that two of the risks had been reduced since the last report (Funding in the 'Treat' category and Industrial Relations in the 'Tolerate' category). As regards the resourcing gaps in some areas, the CFOO reported that these were considered in the planning process and were linked to more accurate forecasting and risk scenarios, with the central focus being on the allocation of scarce resources to mitigate risks. As regards being able to indicate timescales for achieving target risk scores (as previously requested by the Committee), this would be considered in the current RMS review which would consider how best to ensure targets were realistic and achievable. The Committee also observed that the recent financial update from the Vice-Chancellor to the University community needed to be reflected in the risk levels in some areas as this was a 'live' evolving situation. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.
7. The Committee considered a report on corporate risk benchmarking against the Russell Group, internal coverage of academic/PS risks and horizon scanning. The University Secretary noted that the benchmarking had prompted consideration of broadening the current student recruitment and student experience risks and also provided an impetus to include a staff mental health risk and consider how best to present reputational and partnerships risks. In discussion the Committee noted that management 'bandwidth' was currently a risk factor given the number and intensity of current sectoral challenges, and that this related to risks around managing change and maintaining focus on core, value-adding activity. In this area the Deputy Vice-Chancellor emphasised the importance of effective working with senior leaders such as Heads of academic Departments. The Committee welcomed the assurance on horizon scanning and reference to some risks as actually being opportunities. It was generally agreed that both benchmarking and horizon scanning should be undertaken continuously and systematically with agreed processes for escalating matters that needed to be addressed without being constrained by formal reporting schedules.
8. The Committee considered a periodic assurance report on University processes for oversight of UK and international league tables, which the Director of Strategic Planning & Performance noted were in some respects inter-related. As a

general observation it was noted that the UK tables tended to be more data-driven (drawing on NSS, TEF, REF etc) while the international tables were less impartial as based on subjective reputational measures and also certain commercial drivers of the publisher. The Director summarised aspects of both the QS and THE international rankings, noting the increasing number of institutional participants in both and the emergence of developing countries in the lower ranked (200-400) positions, while the top positions remained relatively stable and distributed across USA, UK and Germany. Although other factors such as price were important, the QS table was believed to be the most influential in terms of overseas recruitment. [**MATERIAL REDACTED**]. Noting that the University's overall score had improved but its ranking declined in the THE table (i.e. other universities had improved to a greater degree), it was suggested that dynamic data presentation graphics might be utilised to better understand the improvements among participants.

9. The Committee considered a progress report against the 2024/25 internal audit plan, noting comments from the new audit partner (Ben Connor) that the workplan was currently behind schedule and so efforts were ongoing with the University Secretary to prevent the bunching of final reports being presented to the Committee (as would happen at the next meeting in April). One aspect of this would be to develop and agree the plan for the following year earlier in the academic year so that work could start earlier in the Summer. It was also agreed that seeing the longer term three-year plan and the items carried over to future years would be useful for the Committee in terms of assessing adequate coverage of key areas. As regards follow up on the 14 audit actions currently overdue, renewed efforts were being made to clear these following the transfer of responsibility for internal audit from Finance to the University Secretary's Office. It was noted that some of the older actions would also be reviewed in the context of the University's current position to verify that they remained valid and appropriate. As regards the one finalised report presented to this meeting (Appeals Handling), it was noted that the two medium-risk recommendations related to data integrity and case allocation in the appeals tracking software. The Committee observed that it would have been useful to see in the report some indication of the proportion of students submitting appeals each year and the proportion which were upheld/successful. It was agreed that this data should be provided in the IA progress report to the next meeting as it might engender further discussion in the context of the Committee's observations on the NSS metrics. As regards assessing the effectiveness of internal audit (an item on the Committee's action-schedule), the IA partner confirmed that a useful starting point would be for PwC to gather feedback after each audit from the audit sponsor, and PwC were encouraged to discuss this further with the University Secretary and CFOO. As regards the International Recruitment Agents report from the 2023/24 plan discussed at the last meeting, the CFOO reported that he had requested an updated management response to the findings after which the report could be circulated to the Committee for information.
10. The Committee considered the Audit Findings report from *Azets* in respect of University subsidiary companies. The Audit Partner (Alan Sidebottom) reported a number of modifications to the audit process compared to the previous year which had proved beneficial to both the auditors and the Finance Department. The Audit Manager highlighted the main audit findings and in particular the internal control recommendations [**MATERIAL REDACTED**]. In response to a query from the Committee, the auditors confirmed that they liaised and collaborated effectively with BDO as the main University group auditors, providing information to them as requested. Noting that this would be his last meeting, the Committee thanked Mr Sidebottom for his work on behalf of the University and wished him well in retirement.
11. Under 'Any Other Business' the Finance Director reported that discussions were currently ongoing with the supplier of the University's finance system (*Agresso*) as regards its end-of-life date and the timeframe for its replacement in parallel with the University's HR system. A further update would be provided to the next meeting.

February 2025
DAVID WATSON
Chair, Audit & Risk Committee

University of York

Audit and Risk Committee

Matters for note by the University Council at its meeting on 14 May 2025 arising from the meeting of Audit and Risk Committee held 24 Apr. 2025

Vice-Chancellor and President's report

1. The Committee **considered** an overview report from the Vice-Chancellor, setting out internal and external developments since the Committee's last meeting. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor **reported**: the progress to date in achieving the agreed costs savings for 2025-26; the work underway to develop new sources of income to replace the reductions in existing revenue streams (e.g. international student recruitment); and the steps that were being taken to manage costs and maximise existing income streams in the period before the new income initiatives started to take effect.
2. The Committee **noted** the number, scale and complexity of significant transformational projects and income initiatives that were currently being undertaken; the steps being taken to ensure appropriate capacity and capability was in place to manage this portfolio, and the University's intention to develop further its capacity in this area; and the importance of clear and effective responsibilities and mechanisms for overseeing the progress and implementation of these programmes and initiatives.

Matters Arising: Update on Finance System Procurement

3. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.

Risk Management Reports

4. The Committee **considered** a report on the Corporate Risk Register, and **noted** the changes to the risks and their scoring since the Committee's previous meeting; and the action being taken to address the backlog of issues and actions on fire safety issues and actions as identified in relation to the corporate risk on health and safety (which would be supported by an internal audit of this area).
5. The Committee also **considered** an update on the Review of the Risk Management System. It **noted** its sense that the University was more willing now than it had been in the past to take on risk (as demonstrated by the current new income initiatives), and thought needed to be given to the impact of this on the University's risk appetite statements; and that a final report and recommendations would be submitted for consideration at the Committee's July meeting, and identified a number of issues to be taken account of in preparing that final report.

Periodic Assurance Report: Environmental Sustainability

6. The Committee **considered** a Periodic Assurance Report on the University's approach to environmental sustainability, setting out the University's approach to implementation of its Sustainability Plan and the progress being made to deliver these commitments. The Committee **noted** the University's approach; its focus on delivering the strategic objectives set out in its Sustainability Plan, in the belief this would lead over time to improvement in league table rankings of university performance on sustainability; the potentially significant benefits to the University of the Geothermal project; and that the May meeting of Council would receive an update report on the University's decarbonisation plan.

Internal Audit Plan 2024-25: Progress Report

7. A report on progress against the Internal Audit Plan 2024-25 was **considered**, along with a presentation from the PVC Teaching, Learning and Students on the Student Mental Health and Well-being audit the report of which was still in draft.
8. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.

Draft Internal Audit Plan 2025-26

9. The Committee **considered** a draft of the plan for 2025-26. It **noted** the draft had been prepared following meetings with potential audit sponsors, as well as being considered by UEB and Professional Services Executive Board prior to submission to the Committee. The Committee suggested some potential revisions, but **noted** that both UEB and PSEB were supportive of the University Secretary progressing arrangements for the next round of internal audits based on the draft. The Committee **agreed** that the final version of the Plan should be submitted to its July meeting.

Update on External Audit Plan in respect of the Year Ending 31 July 2025

10. The Committee **noted** that the planning visit with BDO as external auditors had gone well, and that the schedule for the external audit of 2024-25 (including the consideration of its outcomes by Council and its sub-committees) had been agreed.

University of York
Audit and Risk Committee

Matters for note by the University Council at its meeting on 23 July 2025 arising from the meeting of the Committee held on 3 July 2025

1. The Committee considered a report on its **membership in 2025/26**, noting that this would be the last meeting for Chris Thompson and Owen Trotter (although the latter would continue to attend as an observer on becoming the University Treasurer/Chair of Finance Committee). Abisola Sherwood (independent Council member) would become a new member from 1 August 2025.
2. The Committee considered the **final report on the review of its effectiveness**, noting that the report had been submitted to the last Council meeting together with a report on the parallel review of Council effectiveness, and work would now begin to implement the recommendations from both reports. One way in which the Committee would take a more strategic approach was through its schedule of Periodic Assurance Reports which had been extended beyond their initial focus on key corporate risks to wider strategic topics. A new group was also to be established with the Chair of Council, the Chairs of Council sub-committees and the Vice-Chancellor in attendance, to improve the co-ordination of governance oversight.
3. The Committee considered a report from the Director of Strategic Planning & Performance on **movements within the Top 200 of international league tables** (THES and QS), noting that the additional data sought to clarify the extent and location of movements by international region in the context of a general increase in participation in the surveys. Despite the increase in participation the Top 100 positions remained relatively stable due to the largely reputational focus of such international rankings, with the overarching message that the University would need to continue to work hard to maintain its international position (its recent rise of 15 in places in the QS rankings being the result of concerted institutional efforts to improve league table performance).
4. The Committee considered a combined **schedule of previously agreed Periodic Assurance Reports (PARs) and Internal Audit Reports (IARs)** for the coming academic year, noting that following further discussions with the University Secretary, the PAR on the 2025 NSS outcome would be moved from February 2026 to September 2025 and a new PAR on OfS Compliance scheduled in September 2025. Further consideration would be given to a possible PAR on estates-related matters to complement the planned IAR on Estates Maintenance (due to report in February 2026). The University Secretary was currently considering whether there might be duplication of effort with an IAR on commercial/legal support in April 2026 and a PAR on governance around legal compliance in July 2026.
5. The Committee considered its **draft schedule of business for 2025/26**, noting that it retained the previous format structured around the Committee's Terms of Reference and also the timing for certain specific items, especially if they were required to inform the Committee's own Annual Report to Council in November each year. An update from the IT Director on cyber-security had been fixed as an annual item coming to the September meeting and an early draft of the IA Annual Report would be submitted to the September meeting ahead of the final report being provided in November.
6. The Committee considered an **overview report from the Vice-Chancellor**. In presenting the report the Deputy Vice-Chancellor set out in detail how, in comparison to the well-reported financial crises at other HEIs, York had responded robustly to under-lying sector-wide issues, in particular the significant decline in income from international student recruitment. **[**MATERIAL REDACTED**]**.
7. The Committee considered the **final report of the review of the Risk Management System (RMS)**, noting that the review had been undertaken in a phased manner over the course of the year following the transfer of responsibility for risk management from the Planning Office to the University Secretary's Office. The review recommendations sought to enhance the relationships and processes of the existing system, in particular through simplification to drive better engagement among colleagues across the University; the intention was also that the RMS should better support decision-making and be closely integrated into the annual planning cycle. Further piloting would take place to assess whether the 4Risk software currently used in IT Services might be adopted as the University's main risk management platform. In discussion the Committee observed that in terms of assessing the University's overall risk level in the context of multiple simultaneous projects in different areas, a portfolio approach had been trialled by attempts in RIKE to develop an aggregate risk score across multiple different projects supported by the

same research funder. The new guidance on risk ratings was not expected to alter the current risk ratings in the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) but would help to sharpen focus on key areas in the Faculties. Work was also in train to update the University's overarching Risk Management Policy in accordance with the review outcomes and this would be submitted to the next meeting for onwards recommendation to Council. **The Committee resolved to recommend to Council that it approve the report and recommendations of the Risk Management Review.**

8. The Committee considered the **updated Corporate Risk Register (CRR)**, noting in particular the three risk areas currently in the 'Treat' category (Funding, Student Experience and Student Recruitment). [**MATERIAL REDACTED**].
9. The Committee considered a **progress report against the 2024/25 internal audit plan**, taking the following reports as read:
 - *Student and Academic Services: Academic Quality;*
 - *Faculty Financial/Operational Controls: Purchase Cards;*
 - *Student Mental Health and Wellbeing.*
10. The Committee discussed an **internal audit of DTEF: Fire Safety** in detail, noting that the review had focused on the governance, prioritisation and allocation of fire safety actions to provide assurance that appropriate oversight mechanisms were in place. [**MATERIAL REDACTED**].
11. The Committee **approved the updated Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26**, noting that it had been refreshed since the last meeting to include an audit of Business Continuity Management. Given the H&S-related discussions at this meeting (see para 10 above), further consideration would be given to the best timing/scope for possible inclusion of a H&S audit during 2025/26. The timings for individual reviews remained indicative and would be further reviewed to prevent a large number of reports coming to the last meeting of 2025/26, as had happened in the current year.
12. The Committee **approved the updated Internal Audit Procedures document**, noting that the changes reflected the transfer of support for internal audit from the Finance Department to the University Secretary's Office.
13. The Committee noted the **key assumptions and accounting policies** that would be used in preparing the University accounts to 31 July 2025, noting that there were no proposed changes to the Statement of Principal Accounting Policies applied the previous year. It also noted BDO's group **external audit plan** and Azet's external audit plan for subsidiary companies in respect of the year ending 31 July 2025.

July 2025
DAVID WATSON
Chair, Audit & Risk Committee