

Audit and Risk Committee Report

Chair



Frank Nelson

Members



Martyn Coffey



Sucheta Govil

Dear Shareholder,

I am pleased to report to you on the Audit and Risk Committee's objectives and activities during 2020.

This report, which is part of the Directors' Report, explains how the Audit and Risk Committee has discharged its responsibilities during 2020.

During the year, the Committee's work has been dominated by the impact of COVID-19 on the Company's financial position, reporting and risk management.

In considering the Company's financial position and risk management processes, the Committee has considered short and medium-term profit and cash flow projections, in order to understand the range of potential outcomes and support the Executive in proactively managing the emerging effects of the pandemic on the Company's financing and cashflows.

In terms of financial reporting, the Committee has focused on the potential for the unique challenges posed by the pandemic to result in the impairment of assets, including stock, receivables, contract assets and goodwill. Our work, including a summary of the key accounting estimates and judgements made, is set out later in this report.

Further to last year's Audit and Risk Committee report, I can confirm that, following the completion of the 2019 audit, the transition to a new audit engagement partner concluded during the year and I am pleased to welcome Christopher Hibbs to the team.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Committee members, all of whom have served throughout the year, and both the internal and external auditors, for their valuable contribution and support during what has been a challenging period..

Frank Nelson

Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee
11 March 2021

Role and responsibilities:

The key responsibilities of the Committee are to:

- review the Annual Report, half-year report and any other formal announcements relating to the Group's financial performance, giving due consideration to significant accounting issues and judgements contained therein, as well as compliance with accounting standards and other legal and regulatory requirements;
- review the Annual Report and Financial Statements to advise the Board on whether they give a fair, balanced and understandable explanation of the Group's business and performance over the relevant period;
- review the Group's financial reporting systems and procedures;
- review the Group's internal controls and risk management systems and advise the Board whether they are adequate, by considering reports on their effectiveness from the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Executive Officer, together with reports from the Group's outsourced internal auditor and from the external auditor;
- review and update the Group's risk register, as part of the assessment of emerging and principal risks;
- review the Group's procedures to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010 and the Group's whistleblowing policy;
- review the external auditor's independence and objectivity, audit and non-audit fees and make recommendations regarding audit tender and the appointment and remuneration of the auditor, together with the terms of their engagement;
- review the annual audit plan and monitor the effectiveness of the external audit process;
- monitor and review the effectiveness of the outsourced internal audit function, including a review of the internal audit plan, all internal audit reports, and management's responses to the findings and recommendations of the internal audit function;
- consider the adequacy of the Group's finance function;
- review the Group's Tax Strategy; and
- review the Committee Terms of Reference

Summary of activities during the year

The Audit and Risk Committee met formally four times during the year and attendance at the meetings is shown on page 70.

The areas of particular focus for the Committee in 2020, and up to the date of this Annual Report, were as follows:

- Reviewed the 2019 and 2020 Annual Reports, as well as the 2020 Half-Year Report, including preliminary announcements.
- Considered information presented by management on significant accounting estimates and judgements adopted in respect of the Group's 2019 and 2020 Financial Statements and the 2020 Half-Year Report.
- Specifically in relation to 2020 Financial Statements and the 2020 Half-Year Report, considered the impact of COVID-19 on the Company's financial position and reporting, including potential asset impairments and related disclosures.
- Reviewed documentation prepared to support the viability statement and going concern assumption set out on page 63.
- Reviewed the external auditors' plan for their audit for the year ended 31 December 2020.
- Reviewed reports from the external auditor setting out their findings as a result of their audits for the years ended 31 December 2019 and 2020, as well as their review of the 2020 Half-Year Report.
- Considered the impact of any new accounting standards and financial reporting requirements, including guidance issued by the Financial Reporting Council ('FRC').
- Considered reports by management related to the effectiveness of the Group's systems of risk management and internal control.
- Reviewed the Group's risk register, including principal and emerging risks.
- Considered reports prepared by the Group's outsourced internal audit function.
- Considered the results of the externally-facilitated assessment of the Committee's effectiveness.
- Approved updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference.
- Reviewed, and approved updates where applicable, to Group policies for anti-bribery, whistleblowing, capital expenditure and treasury, along with the Group tax strategy.

The Committee was also kept up to date with changes to accounting standards and developments in financial reporting, company law and other regulatory matters through presentations from the external auditor, Chief Financial Officer and the Company's finance function.

The role of the Audit and Risk Committee is to oversee financial reporting. The Committee reviews the ongoing effectiveness of the Group's internal controls and provides assurance on the Group's risk management processes. The Committee also assesses information received from the external and internal audit functions.

Following the 2019 year-end, at the March 2020 meeting, the Committee reviewed and recommended for approval by the Board, the financial results for the year ended 31 December 2019, including a review of the full-year external audit.

As part of that review process, the members of the Committee reviewed the Annual Report, including the adequacy of the disclosure with respect to going concern and viability reporting. The Committee considered the appropriateness of preparing the accounts on a going concern basis, including consideration of forecast plans, and supporting assumptions, as well as sensitivity analysis and concluded that the Company's financial position was such that it continued to be appropriate for accounts to be prepared on a going concern basis.

This additional review by the Audit and Risk Committee, supplemented by advice received from external advisers during the drafting process, assisted the Board in determining that the report was fair, balanced and understandable at the time that it was approved.

Composition

The Audit and Risk Committee is chaired by Frank Nelson and comprises all three of the Non-executive Directors, but not the Chair of the Board, all of whom have served on the Committee throughout the whole year.

The Governance Code recommends that all members of the Audit and Risk Committee are Non-executive Directors, independent in character and judgement and free from any relationship or circumstance which may, could or would be likely to, or appear to, affect their judgement and that one such member has recent and relevant financial experience.

The Board considers that, by virtue of his extensive experience, details of which are set out on page 65, Frank Nelson, a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, has recent and relevant financial experience and the Company complies with the requirements of the Governance Code in this respect. Furthermore, all Committee members have extensive relevant commercial and operational experience, particularly in building/construction and industrial organisations, which both benefit the Committee and collectively illustrate its competence relevant to the sector in which the Group operates.

Only members of the Committee have the right to attend Committee meetings, but both the internal and external auditors were invited to attend all meetings during the year, as a matter of course. Other individuals, such as the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Financial Officer and other members of the Board were invited to attend the Committee meetings as and when appropriate.

Audit and Risk Committee Report continued

Key accounting estimates and judgements

As described above, the Committee reviewed the key estimates and judgements used in the preparation of the Group's 2020 Financial Statements (including a review of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP's report and a discussion of their observations and findings in this area) as follows:

| Area | Estimate/Judgement | Management's approach | Committee's review |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inventory valuation | Provisions for slow-moving items and discontinued product lines | Assessment of the appropriate level of provisioning against obsolescence, undertaken in the context of current trading and the forecast for the next financial year and beyond | Critically reviewed the carrying value of the Group's inventory, the approach taken by management and assessed the reasonableness of the underlying assumptions and financial forecasts used |
| Accounts receivable recoverability | Provisions for bad and doubtful debts | Application of IFRS 9's expected credit loss approach to the impairment of receivables (which requires the use of forward-looking statistical modelling to determine the appropriate level of provision), plus overlays to take into account the potential impact of COVID-19 and credit insurance on recoverability | Critically evaluated the methodology with respect to setting provisions for potential bad and doubtful debts, including management's assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and macro uncertainty, as well as the absolute level of provisions held ¹ |
| Contract asset valuation | Carrying value/impairment of contract payments made to customers | Assessment of contract profitability and potential impairment, undertaken in the context of current and forecast trading levels and the potential impact of COVID-19 on contract performance | Considered the reasonableness of the key estimates and underlying assumptions and forecasts, including management's assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and macro uncertainty, as well the absolute asset value |
| Going concern | Application of the going concern basis in preparing the accounts | Forecasting of profitability and cashflows to December 2023, in conjunction with the commercial and operational teams, to consider various scenarios and the wide range of possible impacts from COVID-19, along with other factors such as Brexit | Considered the reasonableness of the key estimates and underlying assumptions used in the forecasting process, including management's assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and macro uncertainty, the headroom on the RCF facility and the associated covenant compliance |
| Asset impairment | Carrying value/impairment of non-current assets | Assessment of supportable carrying values, calculated based on current trading and medium-term cash flow forecasts, which include the estimated impact of COVID-19 | Considered the reasonableness of the key estimates and underlying assumptions and forecasts, including management's assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and macro uncertainty, as well the absolute asset value |

Notes:

1 The Committee's review also considered the specific nature and characteristics of customers in the Group's 2 major divisions.

In addition, the external auditor met regularly with the Committee without executive management being present and met separately with each of the Audit and Risk Committee Chair and the Chief Financial Officer.

The Audit and Risk Committee will meet as often as it deems necessary but, in accordance with its terms of reference, at least three times a year.

Risk management

The Group's risk management processes are set out in detail on pages 56 to 57.

The Group maintains a risk register that identifies key and emerging risks, the probability of those risks occurring and the impact they would have on the Group if unmitigated. Against each gross risk, the controls that exist to manage and, where possible, minimise or eliminate those risks are also listed, and an assessment of net risk is provided. The risk register also identifies any further actions required such that net residual risk is consistent with the risk appetite set by the Board. The register is regularly updated to reflect changes in circumstances.

The Group's Risk Management Committee is chaired by the Chief Financial Officer. This Committee reviews significant risks and the status of related mitigating actions each quarter.

The Audit and Risk Committee reviews the risk register twice per year to ensure the timely identification and robust management of inherent and emerging risks is taking place. To the extent that any failings or weaknesses are identified during the review process, appropriate measures are taken to remedy these.

Information relating to the management of risks and any changes to the assessment of key risks is reported by the Audit and Risk Committee to the Board.

Internal controls

The Board is responsible for the overall system of internal controls for the Group and for reviewing its effectiveness. In accordance with FRC guidance, it carries out such a review at least annually, covering all material controls including financial, operational and compliance controls and risk management systems.

In particular, the Board discharges its duties in this area by:

- holding regular Board meetings to consider the matters reserved for its consideration;
- receiving regular management reports which provide an assessment of key risks and controls;
- scheduling annual Board reviews of strategy including reviews of the material risks and uncertainties facing the business;
- ensuring there is a clear organisational structure with defined responsibilities and levels of authority which are regularly reviewed;
- ensuring there are documented policies and procedures in place; and
- scheduling regular Board reviews of performance against financial budgets and forecasts.

In reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal controls, the Audit and Risk Committee:

- reviews the risk register compiled and maintained by senior managers within the Group at least bi-annually and question and challenge where necessary;
- regularly reviews the systems of financial and accounting controls; and
- reports to the Board on the risk and control culture within the Group.

The Group has several operating policies and controls in place covering a range of issues including financial reporting, capital expenditure, business continuity and information technology, including cyber security, and appropriate employee policies. These policies are designed to ensure the accuracy and reliability of financial reporting and govern the preparation of financial statements.

In respect of the Group's financial reporting, the Finance Department is responsible for preparing the Group financial statements using a well-established process and ensuring that accounting policies are in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards. All financial information published by the Group is subject to the approval of the Audit Committee.

The internal control environment was strengthened in 2020 in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, as described in the Corporate Governance Statement on page 70, the Board increased the regularity and frequency of its business review meetings.

In addition, with the Group's finance and administrative teams working substantially from home during the period, controls related to the processing of cash payments and receipts were enhanced during lockdown periods (e.g. higher levels of approval required for transactions over certain limits). More generally, the Group's IT team have remained particularly vigilant and alive to cyber risks during this period and we continue to invest in our cyber security.

Other than as described above, there have been no changes in the Company's internal control systems during the financial year under review that have materially affected, or are reasonably likely to materially affect, the Company's control over financial reporting.

The Board, with advice from the Audit and Risk Committee, is satisfied that an effective system of internal controls and risk management is in place which enables the Company to identify, evaluate and manage key and emerging risks and which accords with the guidance published by the FRC.

These processes have been in place since the start of the financial year and up to the date of approval of the accounts. Further details of specific material risks and uncertainties facing the business can be found on pages 58 to 62.

Internal audit

KPMG LLP provide an outsourced Internal Audit function which complements the internal finance-based checks performed on the branch network operations.

During early 2020, the Committee worked with KPMG LLP to agree the programme for the year, which included reviews of business continuity planning, tax risk, treasury management, expenses and whistleblowing/Code of Conduct.

However, as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on the availability of key staff, with the Committee's approval, the Internal Audit program was temporarily suspended during Q2 and Q3. However, it resumed in Q4 with a Brexit readiness review and a full programme, approved by the Committee, is planned for 2021.

The Committee also formally reviews the Group's progress in implementing the improvement recommendations raised through the internal audit process in conjunction with the Executive Committee members, who monitor a report on the status of the outstanding actions on a monthly basis. Whilst COVID-19 has caused some delays to implementation, overall progress remains satisfactory.

External audit and auditors' independence

The Audit and Risk Committee has primary responsibility for making a recommendation to the Board on the appointment, reappointment, removal and remuneration of the external auditors. It keeps under review the scope and results of the audit, its cost-effectiveness and the independence and objectivity of the auditors.

The external auditor is required periodically to assess whether, in its professional opinion, it is independent and those views are shared with the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee has authority to take independent advice as it deems appropriate in order to resolve issues on auditor independence. No such advice has been required to date. There are no contractual obligations in place that restrict the choice of statutory auditor.

The Group's current auditors, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP were appointed at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 29 April 2015, following the Company's IPO in March 2015. As a result, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP may remain as external auditor without re-tender for ten years from that date, until the completion of the 2025 annual audit. The Committee considers the need to tender the audit on an annual basis and there are no current plans to perform such a tender.

Audit and Risk Committee Report continued

In accordance with best ethical standards, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP has processes in place designed to maintain independence, including the rotation of the audit engagement partner at least every five years. As a result of these processes, the previous audit engagement partner stepped-down following the conclusion of the 2019 audit and, following a handover period, the current audit engagement partner, Christopher Hibbs, assumed full responsibility.

The Committee has also adopted policies to safeguard the independence of its external auditors. Any work awarded to the external auditors with a value of more than £5,000 in aggregate in any financial year, other than an audit, requires the specific approval of the Committee. Where the Committee perceives that the independence of the auditors could be compromised, the work will not be awarded to the auditors. Details of amounts paid to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP for audit and audit related assurance services in 2020 are set out on page 133. The audit related assurance services provided during the year were in relation to the half-year report (£35,000) and the sustainability measure which was introduced into the Company's banking facility (£25,000).

Prior to recommending the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP at the forthcoming AGM to the Board, the Committee reviewed the audit process, the performance of the auditor and its ongoing independence, taking into consideration:

- an assessment of the lead audit partner and the audit team, including their responses to questions from the Committee;
- a review of the audit approach, scope, determination of significant risk areas and materiality;
- the execution of the audit and the audit findings reported;
- input from, and interaction with, management and communication with, and support to, the Committee;
- the quality of any recommendation points; and
- a review of independence, objectivity and scepticism.

Based on this review, the Committee concluded that the external audit process had been run efficiently and that PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP has been effective in its role as external auditor.

The Committee is satisfied that the independence of the external auditor is not impaired and the level of fees paid for non-audit services, details of which are set out in Note 5 to the Financial Statements, does not jeopardise its independence. In conclusion, the Committee has assessed the performance and independence of the external auditor and recommended to the Board the re-appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as auditor until the AGM in 2022.

Whistleblowing and bribery

The Audit and Risk Committee monitors any reported incidents under our whistleblowing policy, which is available to all employees. This policy sets out the procedure for employees to raise legitimate concerns about any wrongdoing without fear of criticism, discrimination or reprisal.

During the year, there were no reports received through the whistleblowing process.

The Audit and Risk Committee also takes responsibility for reviewing the policies and procedures adopted by the Group to prevent bribery. The Group is committed to a zero-tolerance position with regard to bribery. The Committee is satisfied that the Group's procedures with respect to these matters are adequate.