

22 September 2025

Richard Leonard MSP
Convenor
Public Audit Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Convenor

The 2022/23 audit of Forth Valley College

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the submission to the Committee by the Principal and Chief Executive of Forth Valley College following our evidence session for the above report on 4 June 2025.


I am pleased to note that the college accepts the overall conclusions of my Section 22 report. I also note and welcome the change to the secretariat arrangements for the college's Board of Management, which is in line with the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges. We note the paper that went to the Forth Valley College Board of Management outlining the rationale behind the dual role of the Vice Principal for Finance and Corporate Affairs. Regardless of the rationale I still consider that arrangement to have presented the risk of a conflict of interest.

The Principal and Chief Executive refers to several specific points, most of which are consistent with my report, and confirm the areas where the college could have acted differently or sooner. The only points where I would offer further comment are:

- I reiterate our conclusion in my Section 22 report that it was reasonable for the college to prepare its lessons learned report on the Fuel Change project without the input of key individuals due to the circumstances related to those individuals, but that the objectivity of the report is limited without their involvement. There are contrasting views on the issues outlined in the report between those involved in the Fuel Change project.
- While we used the lessons learned report as an evidence source in preparing the Section 22 report, it would not be accurate to say it was based on the lessons learned report, as suggested in the Principal and Chief Executive's submission. Our view that the lessons learned report lacked objectivity meant we did not rely solely on its findings. The Section 22 report was informed by a wide body of evidence, sourced from Forth Valley College and other individuals involved in the Fuel Change project, to ensure the views of all parties were considered.
- The Principal and Chief Executive is right to point out that the Fule Change Ltd subsidiary was only ever a dormant company and never traded. But our findings on process were wider than whether the subsidiary was operational, and more to do with appropriately managing the risks associated with engaging with external providers or undertaking commercial activity.

I hope you find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Boyle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Boyle
Auditor General for Scotland