

THE TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of the Corporation
held on Wednesday 19 July 2023 at 5.30 pm
in the Aspire Restaurant at the Altrincham Campus**

* Attended the meeting via Microsoft Teams

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COR/57/23 Apologies for Absence

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that apologies for absence had been received from Michelle McLaughlin, Jonathan O'Brien, and Jeremy Woodside.

Fatema Desai was not in attendance at the meeting.

The Chairperson of the Corporation welcomed Paul Butler (PB), External Governor Reviewer, to the meeting.

PB expressed his thanks to members and senior managers for their time and considerations during the External Governance Review process.

COR/58/23 Declarations of Direct or Indirect Interests in any of the meeting's business items

There were no declarations of Direct or Indirect Interests in any of the meeting's business items.

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COR/59/23 Minutes of the Board of the Corporation Meeting held on 17 May 2023

There were no issues raised by members and it was resolved that the minutes of the meeting be approved and accepted as a correct account of the meetings proceedings.

COR/60/23 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Chairperson of the Board of the Corporation referred members to the previously circulated summary and progress update concerning the actions arising from the minutes and earlier meetings of the Board of the Corporation.

It was confirmed that the majority of actions were closed and those that remained open were largely in the future in terms of their action.

i) COR/39/23 – Annual Strategic Conversation with External Agencies

The Principal and Chief Executive (PCEO) reported that the Group continued to await the report from Annual Strategic Conversation, adding that once the report had been received it would be shared with members.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

ii) COR/06/23 – Annual Pay Gap Report and its publication on the Group's website

There was confirmation that the resolution of the website issues was ongoing and that liaison was taking place with the relevant staff.

There were no further issues raised by members arising from the minutes.

COR/61/23 Outcomes from the Consultation Process for Change in Corporation Name

The Director of Marketing and External Relations (DMER) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the proposed change in the legal name of the Group from "The Trafford College Group" to "Trafford and Stockport College Group" and the associated consultation process.

The DMER confirmed that the proposed name change had been agreed in principle by the Board of the Corporation at its meeting in March 2023.

The DMER took members through the consultation process and confirmed that a wide range of stakeholders had been engaged with adding that 318 responses had been obtained within which 86% were either in agreement or neutral in the opinion that the name change better reflected the Group's offer and position across the two boroughs within which it operated.

It was noted that responses had been received from Greater Manchester (GM) Police and GM Fire Service and further that a response had now been made by the Ambulance Service.

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The PCEO added that in recent weeks there had also been face-to-face contact with a number of stakeholders including the Leader of Stockport MBC via the Economic Alliance.

Clarity was sought with respect to when the official name change was likely to take place.

The DMER responded that the guidance indicated that a response was usually made by the Department for Education (DfE) within 4 weeks however due to the submission coinciding with the summer period there was an expectation that a response would not be made until the end of August 2023/beginning of September 2023.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration and deliberation it was unanimously resolved that a change in the name of the Corporation from “The Trafford College Group” to “Trafford and Stockport College Group” be duly approved and that the Principal and CEO be mandated to submit an application accordingly to the Secretary of State.

Action: Director of Marketing and External Relations/Principal and CEO

COR/62/23 Strategic Focus Discussion

The PCEO referred members to the previously circulated report and key updates on the Group's strategic direction, Operational Plan and KPIs since the May 2023 report.

There was confirmation the report comprised three elements:

- the Operational Plan (OP) 2022/2023
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2022/2023
- Stockport Economic Plan Update Report (July 2023).

The following key aspects from the report were highlighted:

- confirmation that the Group KPIs and OP position as at July 2023 did not represent the final report each of which would be presented in the autumn term
- the presentation of an overview within the covering report of the key movements
- that within the supporting documents there was a copy of the updated Stockport Economic Plan to which members had previously had input
- the discussion within the Stockport Economic Plan in respect of the LSIP
- confirmation that the Group was able to demonstrate the content of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and its practical actions such as the new leadership offer, an example of the LSIP in action
- the Greater Manchester (GM) Mayor's conversation around GM as a Technical Education City Region and the promotion of two equal pathways for young people, one being academic and the other technical
- that as part of the Trailblazer Devolution Deal GM had further oversight of post-16 technical skills
- the national position including the ongoing lobbying to attract higher levels of funding to the sector, noting that there had been a commitment of some

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additional funding which had been welcomed but was not anywhere near the ask.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member, with reference to the Operational Plan and Strategic Priority 3 (SP3), highlighted the action in relation to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and the point at which it was likely to be fully embedded. The comment made within the report that the full CRM system was still in development due to MIS capacity issues was highlighted.

The PCEO provided assurance that the Group had a management system in place and that the issue was as to how it was utilised to support effective engagement with employers. It was added that colleagues, which included key account managers, were clear about their work with employers and how the Group operated. It was recognised however that the system was not a sophisticated one and that MIS continued to be a challenge.

There was confirmation that half termly meetings were held with the MIS Manager to oversee target priorities and focus. The PCEO reiterated that there was confidence as to where the Group now was although it was recognised that there were still some key vacancies covered by consultants. It was added that during the latest Executive Roadshows, during which meetings had been held with staff from across the Group, MIS had not been raised as an issue.

The CS highlighted the audit tracker considered by the Audit Committee within which the MIS actions were separately detailed. It was noted that the MIS actions were routinely considered at each meeting of the Audit Committee.

- A member asked as to the position in relation to the Trafford equivalent of the Stockport Economic Plan and their considerations around the LSIP.

The PCEO responded that Trafford were at a point of reviewing their action plan. In addition, it was reported that the Group had recently hosted a workshop to support Trafford Council and other partners to start to develop the new Trafford Economy, Enterprise and Skills Action Plan which also looked at the key findings from the LSIP. Assurance was provided that the Group was undertaking a lot of work in support of Trafford Council albeit it was recognised that Trafford were not as advanced as Stockport in terms of their plans.

- It was asked as to the Trafford BC fit in terms of the LSIP.

The PCEO stated that the LSIP was now approaching finalisation and that Trafford BC were also taking the opportunity to fully revise their Economic Plan accordingly.

- With respect to Employer Advisory Boards (EABs) a question was asked by a member as to whether there was any role for governors on these Boards.

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The PCEO suggested that, at the moment, he believed that there was good visibility of the work of the EABs through the Governor Link process. There was recognition however that the Board of the Corporation may wish to consider as to whether they would want a place on the Advisory Boards.

In relation to GM it was noted that the Mayor was seeking to adopt advisory boards across 7 areas and that as Group there was a need to look as to how there could be alignment and support at a GM level.

The CS referred to a discussion that took place, some time ago, with the Assistant Principal Adult and Employer Engagement around representation on advisory groups at which time there was no progression in respect of representation due to time commitments. It was added that it was considered that there may be more potential for governor input should a strategic oversight group be progressed.

The PCEO suggested that this was something that needed to be given further thought and it was agreed that the PCEO, Chairperson and CS discuss the matter further and bring back proposals to a future meeting of the Board of the Corporation.

The view was expressed by a member that it was considered that there were different forms of involvement and that input could be transactional rather than on a relationship basis for the Group. The PCEO commented that the next agenda item in respect of the Accountability Statement looked at how the Group met local and national needs and that there may be potential for linking the two together.

The view was further expressed by a member that there was a need to take a holistic view. It was added that there were already a number of steering boards across the various sectors and that there may be risks of duplication.

There was agreement that a proposal would be brought to the next meeting of the Board of the Corporation.

Action: PCEO/Chairperson/Corporation Secretary/Link Governor Employer Engagement

There were no further questions or comments raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the key updates on the Group's strategic direction, Operational Plan and KPIs since the May 2023 report be received and noted.

COR/63/23 Final Accountability Statement 2023/2024

The PCEO referred members to the previously circulated report and the accompanying Final Accountability Statement (AS) 2023/2024.

The PCEO confirmed that the Draft Accountability Statement had been approved by the Board of the Corporation at its May 2023 meeting and had subsequently been submitted in a draft format to the Department of Education (DfE) at the end of May 2024.

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It was noted that at the time of the Draft AS submission, the GM LSIP had not yet been released and there was recognition that the AS would need to be revisited in respect of a sense check.

The PCEO indicated that the Final AS had been updated in the context of the LSIP and further that the following changes had also been made:

- the inclusion of additional targets in the statement;
- the updating of the narrative in the statement following feedback from Trafford Council.

It was noted that a copy of the GM LSIP had also been provided in the supporting documentation which was also awaiting a final sign off from the DfE. It was reiterated that the LSIP was an “iterative process” and the start of a journey.

The PCEO highlighted a key change in the objectives in relation to what the Group needed to do to prepare young people for work. It was added that it was, considered to be, right and proper to reflect this within the statement.

There was recognition that as an individual institution the Group could not in isolation resolve identified issues and that the approach was about picking the right things to respond to over the next 12 months as part of the GM collaborative process.

The PCEO stated that in terms of the objectives within the AS these would subsequently be reflected in the OP thereby delivering alignment between the two processes.

There was confirmation that at the point of signing off the AS would be uploaded to the DfE portal as well as being published on the Group’s website.

The comment was made that the DfE would not be “marking” the AS but that when they next met with the Group, they would be reviewing progress and looking at how nationally ASs were being responded to, part of which would be identifying key themes and forming a view on improvements in the process for the next year.

It was stated that as a Board a statutory duty was now placed on members to review how the Group was meeting skill needs and that a long conversation had taken place with the DfE the previous week around this aspect. It was suggested that governors self-assessed performance as part of the wider Group self-assessment process, which was externally validated by Ofsted, but that the AS would also address how well skill needs were being met.

In terms of the meeting of skill needs it was noted that the DfE guidance was very limited in terms of how the Board should go about reviewing performance and further there was also a need to take into account the views of other GM governing bodies. It was suggested that this went beyond GM colleges, for which there were already established forums, to the less well-developed relationships with schools and other FE colleges who in some cases may be competitors.

There was confirmation that the DfE guidance was suggesting that the actions of a college needed to take into account other provision when making plans. The

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PCEO indicated that he had shared the approach being taken in Stockport however it was added that the question remained as to what the governance should look like.

The PCEO stated that there would be a need to look at the self-assessment process, separate from the College SAR, with a view to addressing how the Group was meeting local skills needs.

The PCEO added that at the meeting, the previous week, the DfE had indicated that they had been exploring a skills measure but that no further information had been shared in terms of what it may look like.

The PCEO further drew attention to the final point in the supporting report and stated that TTCG was now working as part of a group of 9 colleges plus 6th forms and other equivalent institutions to access the new Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), with the bid being led by Greater Manchester Colleges. It was noted that the fund would provide circa £8m over the next two years which would deliver capital and revenue across GM to support investment in Construction, Digital, Education, Engineering and Health. It was noted that TTCG would be leading on the Education strand of the LSIF.

Reference was also made to the UK Prosperity Fund which was targeted toward NEETs, over 55s and the economically unemployed, for which TTCG would not be submitting a bid but for which it hoped to be part of the supply chain.

Members made the following comments in respect of the matters raised:

- A member commented that with respect to the awaited skills measures a change in the Lead Ofsted Inspector was imminent and that this may precipitate change. It was also noted that an election would be taking place in the next 12-18 months, and this could also lead to further changes.
- Another member commented on the duty of care to work at a local level with other stakeholders and schools. The PCEO clarified that there was a duty when reviewing provision to take into account wider educational provision in the local area and to work together strategically to meet the local skill needs.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that the updated and final version of the Group's Final Accountability Statement be approved and duly submitted to the Department for Education by the end of July 2023 and published on the Group's website.

Action: Principal and CEO

COR/64/23 Quality Improvement Plans 2022/2023

The Deputy Principal (DP) referred members to the previously circulated reports in respect of the FE and HE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

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There was confirmation that each of the QIPs had been considered in detail at the respective meetings of the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee and the HE Curriculum and Quality Committee.

Reference was made to the detailed supporting reports from which the following was highlighted:

- with respect to FE, the KPIs presented a mixed picture with good progress being made in a number of areas as well as for some positive “amber” KPIs particularly in relation to retention and vulnerable learners
- that for apprenticeships there was confidence that the achievement rate would not fall below 60% recognising that this did not mean that the students would not achieve but that their achievement would not have been achieved by 31 July 2023
- significant progress had been made around improving the consistency and standards in the quality of education for learners with High Needs (HNs)
- additional capacity in the Student Experience team had positively impacted on students’ personal, social, emotional and cultural development, enhanced the student experience and driven positive behaviours
- good progress had been made in all identified areas of the HE QIP.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member commented on the performance against the CPD KPI in relation to FE.

The DP responded that this target largely related to new and recently appointed teachers. It was further added that the KPI was non-mandatory and was more around self-improvement.

The Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning (VPCSP) alluded to the potential for targets around those teachers who were not qualified and those teachers joining from industry. It was suggested that becoming qualified would be a good measure inclusive of the support being made available by the Group.

- A member sought clarity in relation to the Tuition Fund and its utilisation.

The DP confirmed that the monies had been awarded post the pandemic and that their application had initially been quite prescriptive adding that this was less so now.

- The question was asked by another member as to whether the Tuition Fund would be continuing.

The DP stated that the Tuition Fund had been confirmed for one more year.

- A member referenced the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in addition to mental health pressures.

The PCEO made reference to a piece of work, led by the DP, that was seeking to bring together the various sources of available support, with a view to being

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placed to promote and signpost that which was available to students i.e. students would know what support was available to them.

- The impact and knock of effects on the strike days was raised by a member.

The DP responded that it was anticipated the impact would continue to be seen into the next academic year, adding that this was an area that would be closely monitored. The PCEO added that from a HE perspective there would not be an impact, as to date there had not been any strike action.

The member referred to the positive discussion that had taken place at the recent HE Curriculum and Quality Committee in relation to small class sizes as well as the mechanisms for increasing student engagement response rates.

Another member further alluded to the considerations of the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee around the QIP and support for high needs including how much this aspect had improved.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the update in respect of the Quality Improvement Plans be received and noted.

COR/65/23 Letter from the Department for Education Apprenticeship Accountability Framework

The PCEO referred members to a copy of a letter, dated 28 June 2023, from the Department for Education (DfE) in relation to the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework.

Reference was also made the Governor Training Event held on 5 July 2023 in relation to Apprenticeships and the Apprenticeship Framework.

There was confirmation that a conversation had taken place with the DfE around the Apprenticeship Framework and the actions being taken to meet the quality and/or supplementary indicators that fell below the published threshold. It was noted that the letter had been sent post that conversation and within which the message was that there was reassurance with actions that had been taken by the Group.

The PCEO indicated that the data related to the previous year and that it was expected that the outcomes would be much improved for the current academic year.

Assurance was provided that for out of funded learners this aspect had been worked upon relentlessly and that the number of learners that had passed their end date was now in single figures. In addition, it was reported that all data had been cleansed and errors corrected.

Members noted that a dialogue would continue with the DfE who would also maintain oversight via the Apprenticeship QIP. It was indicated that it was anticipated a further improved position would be seen in October 2023.

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Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member asked a question in relation to what would happen should the desired progress not be made.

The DP responded that sanctions could include the ceasing of recruitment which would have a negative impact from the perspective of both employers and students. The DP indicated that she was unaware of any providers who had been stopped from recruiting.

- The member further asked as to whether there was an expectation that the targets would be met by 2025.

The DP expressed confidence that the targets would be achieved within this timeframe.

Discussion followed around the challenges for the sector nationally achieving the 67% achievement rate for apprenticeship standards by 2025. The PCEO stated that the Group was making more informed decisions about who it worked with in terms of employers, adding that robust discussions had recently taken place with a small number of employers to ensure that an apprenticeship clearly matched the job role.

It was further suggested that a more strategic approach was being taken in relation to the apprenticeship offer which had for example included a shift in the Health and Social Care provision to AEB. Members noted that this area had a high dropout rate and that the Group had sought to develop an offer that met the needs of employers in other ways.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the position in relation to performance against the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework and the actions being taken, be received and noted.

COR/66/23 Key Issues of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Meeting held on 16 June 2023

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Link Governor presented update from the meeting of the EDI Committee meeting held on 16 June 2023.

The following areas were highlighted:

- the work taking place in relation to the EDI calendar within which there would be an emphasis upon linking into key events
- a campaign launched by Human Resources (HR) to encourage greater disclosure of data on the part of staff
- a HR review of new starters and their transfer to HR systems
- a review of the annual plan which placed emphasis upon inclusion, the monitoring of Higher Needs learners and adoption of family friendly policies
- positive action in relation to recruitment which had included signing up to a number of job boards
- the work taking place around 'blind' shortlisting and protected characteristics

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- consideration of the community role and the undertaking of partnership reviews
- sustainability initiatives which included a digital inclusion relaunch in September 2023
- consideration of the Student Outcome report which had included looking at factors affecting retention from specific student groups.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the key issues from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 16 June 2023 be received and noted.

COR/67/23 Draft Budget 2023/2024 and Financial Forecast 2023/2026

The CFO referred members to the previously circulated report in respect of the proposed Budget 2023/2024 and Financial Forecast 2023/206 which was required to be submitted to the ESFA by 31 July 2023.

There was confirmation that the supporting documents had been considered in detail at the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 21 June 2023. It was further stated that the Committee had reviewed, scrutinised and challenged the assumptions made in the Plan including those around the options for Financial Health Grading, income, pay at 65% and the non-pay assumptions.

The CFO confirmed that following due consideration the Committee recommended the Budget 2023/2024 and Financial Forecast 2023/2026 to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

Clarity was provided around the position with respect to pay following the recent government announcement of extra monies to support a 6.5% pay award for teachers in schools. There was confirmation that extra monies were to be made available to FE colleges but that these monies would not support an equivalent pay increase for the FE sector.

The PCEO added that the extra monies would come via the 16-19 route and that further information was likely to be available in September 2023. The view was expressed that 6th form colleges would be provided with a much better deal than that which would be made to the wider FE sector but that at the moment this could not yet be quantified.

There was confirmation that any extra monies received would go towards the supporting of the pay award which was not currently allowed for within the budget proposal.

Members were directed to the additional information provided within the supporting papers.

The Chairperson of the Resources Committee concurred with the CFO stating that the Committee had devoted a good proportion of its meeting to scrutinising the proposal. The Chairperson of the Resources Committee further stated that it was believed a good budget had been presented and that appropriate provisions had been made, albeit recognising that were some risks but that overall, a sensible mid-line budget had been presented.

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The PCEO reiterated that the extra monies announced by the government would be nowhere near the 6.5% announced for schools and that in communications with staff there would be need to manage expectations.

- A question was asked by a member in relation to the latest talks with the trade unions and their ask for next year.

The PCEO responded that the for next year the ask was in the region of 15%. There was confirmation that all discussions with the trade unions with respect to 2022/2023 had been concluded.

Members recorded their thanks to the CFO and her team for their hard work in relation to the production of the Budget and Financial Forecast.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that the Budget 2023/2024 and Financial Forecast 2023/2026 be duly approved and submitted to the ESFA in advance of 31 July 2023.

COR/68/23 Chief Finance Officer's Report and Management Accounts for the Period ending 31 May 2023

The CFO referred members to the previously circulated report in respect of the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 May 2023, as well as the more detailed report provided within the supplementary pack.

The following key issues were outlined:

- governor monitoring of key and achievable financial targets encompassing a Financial Health Grade of Good; EBITDA of 6.2%; staff pay to income ratio of 68.2%; and that all bank covenants were achieved
- confirmation that the Resources Committee had scrutinised the April 2023 Management Accounts but due to timing the May 2023 Management Accounts were as presented to the Board of the Corporation
- that the Financial Health Grade continued to be Good with the year to date also reflecting as Good
- both the borrowing metric and the solvency metric continue to be above average compensating for the poor EBITDA score
- the EBITDA as a percentage of income had deteriorated slightly since the last report largely due to a prior year accrual for apprenticeship income which would not be paid
- staff to income ratio was forecast to be slightly better than plan due to the reduction in the level of income which had been subcontracted
- pay and non-pay controls introduced earlier in the academic year continued to be in place
- the Debt Service Cover covenant calculated using operating cashflows, as previously reported, had been breached
- the operational leverage was now the tightest covenant with headroom at £385k which meant that any further deterioration in EBITDA also risked non-compliance with this covenant
- a complete set of the Management Accounts and supporting appendices had been included in the supporting documentation pack.

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With respect to the Barclays Covenant Waiver and the Debt Service Cover covenant the CFO reported that permission had been given by the DfE to pay the waiver. Reference was made to the accompanying Letter of Variation (LOV) which essentially confirmed that the Debt Service Covenant would not be tested for the period ending 31 July 2023.

The CFO further stated that the covenant breach had also been discussed and agreed with the external auditors arising from which they had confirmed that it would not impact of the Group's going concerns assessment at the end of the academic year provided that the LOV was in place prior to the accounts being signed off.

Further reporting took place in respect of:

- the economic picture
- ONS classification updates including the ongoing debate and consultation around the making of a change in the financial year end to 31 March 2023
- statutory and regulatory changes.

Members were further directed to the previously circulated letter from the Secretary of State for Education, dated 13 July 2023, in respect of a College Funding Update.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that:-

- (a) the Chief Finance Officer's Report be received and noted;**
- (b) the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 May 2023 including the year-end forecast, be duly approved;**
- (c) the College Funding Update letter be received and noted.**

A letter of variation (the **Letter of Variation**) was submitted to the meeting from Barclays Bank UK PLC (the **Bank**) to the Borrower (TCG) setting out the amendments to a facility agreement dated 5 April 2018 (the **Facility Agreement**) pursuant to which the Bank has offered the Borrower the Facility (as defined in the Facility Agreement).

There were no additional questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that:

- 1. The amendments set out in the Letter of Variation are in the interests of and for the benefit of the Borrower and were most likely to promote the success of the Borrower for the benefit of the members as a whole and that such terms and conditions of the Letter of Variation be and are approved and accepted.**
- 2. The Principal and CEO and Chairperson of the Board of the Corporation be authorised to sign the Letter of Variation on behalf of the Borrower to indicate acceptance of the terms and conditions.**
- 3. The Bank be authorised to act in all matters concerning the Facility as amended by the Letter of Variation upon instruction from the Borrower, in its capacity as Borrower of the Facility, signed in accordance with the Bank's**

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mandate for any of the accounts of the Borrower held with the Bank current from time to time.

Action: Chairperson; Principal and CEO; Chief Finance Officer

There was confirmation that the Letter of Variation would subsequently be submitted to Barclays, once approval for the DfE to the consent fee had been obtained.

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Annual Merger Grant Facility Annual Report 2023

The CFO referred members to the previously circulated Annual Report to DfE in relation to the merger grant facility and Estates Progress Report.

There was confirmation that within the grant agreement there was a requirement for the Group to provide an annual report summarising and updating the ESFA on the progress of the merger objectives, including progress with KPIs.

It was further stated that the Annual Financial Return was prepared alongside the Financial Statements and audited by Armstrong Watson. The CFO added that this brief update had been provided to the Board of the Corporation for context and assurance.

The following was highlighted:

- that operational milestones had been met
- in relation to KPIs achievement rates and class sizes were rated as amber and not quite at the expected level of outcome
- all other conditions had been met
- a summary had been presented detailing the total grant and the amounts that had been claimed since the end of June 2023
- an overview of the amounts left to claim which included IT kit and Marple capital works.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- Clarity was sought by a member in relation to some of dates and contract periods in relation to the summary of projects.

The CFO undertook to extend the information provided in future reports through to 2025 where appropriate.

Action: Chief Finance Officer

The VPCSP with reference to the Estates Progress Report reported that the pre-construction agreement had been agreed and a contractor selected in relation to Cheadle redevelopment.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Annual Merger Grant Report for submission to the Department of Education in advance of 31 July 2023 be

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approved and further that the current draw down position of against the grant be noted.

COR/70/23 Board Assurance and Risk Management Framework Update July 2023

The CFO referred members to the previously circulated report and the information to support the Board's role in monitoring Board Assurance and Risk Management throughout the year with a view to satisfying itself that risks were being actively managed with appropriate controls in place and working effectively.

There was assurance that the Audit Committee had received the full framework and a detailed report which had focused upon risks with a gross impact higher than 15.

On the recommendation of the Audit Committee, it was requested that the following 3 strategic risks be removed from the risk register:

- SE1/1 Failure to realise the benefits of the Stockport redevelopment project and deliver against the cost and time parameters leading to additional strain in the finance and/or student performance

Removal of the risk was requested consistent with the completion of the project and teaching having been moved across to the new build in January 2023. It was noted that the remaining works in relation to the car park and external were of low value in comparison to the overall project value and were further being managed via the Estates operational risk register and routine capital monitoring.

- OTH1/1 Failure to recognise/prevent /manage a safeguarding incident due to poor protocol or training

Reference was made to the significant amount of work that had taken place in this area to promote, resource and enhance the Group's protocols and training in this area. It was noted that there was good assurance in this area and that management would take place through the operational risk register.

- OTH1/7 – MIS staffing issues exacerbated and leading to potential inability to maximise funding, respond to audits, and to provide business intelligence.

There was confirmation that the majority of vacant roles had been recruited to and further that the GMCA audit had been returned as amber, demonstrating significant progress towards robust processes, and supported by weekly automated reports at the commencement of each week.

Members raised a number of issues arising from the report as follows:

- A member thanked the CFO for the really helpful Executive Summary and sought clarification concerning a partner relationship and a sub-contracting relationship.

The CFO explained in detail the difference in the relationships to the members satisfaction.

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- A member commented around the risks relating to the £1m increase in energy costs and whether the students were involved through the green assembly to help reduce costs.

The Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning provided the member with full details of the actions that had been taken with both staff and students to ensure that everybody was fully engaged with the Group's conservation approaches. The PCEO further commented that he had met with the Student Green assembly but that there was further work to be done in this area and that conversations would continue to be undertaken with all relevant parties.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that the Board Assurance and Risk Management Framework Update July 2023 be received and noted and further that the removal of the three strategic risks as outlined be approved.

Action: Chief Finance Officer

COR/71/23 Minutes and Key Issues of the Health and Safety Committee Meeting held on 7 June 2023

The VPCSP referred members to the previously circulated minutes and provided an overview of the key issues considered by the Health and Safety Committee held on 7 June 2023.

The VPCSP confirmed that 2 incidents had been reported in the minutes and provided assurance that they had been dealt with accordingly and handled well. In addition, an issue around students not disclosing medical conditions was flagged, arising from which it was reported that a collaborative piece of work was taking place at enrolment.

A member commented that in addition to the enrolment initiative there was also a need to address how information would be updated moving forward.

The VPCSP also highlighted the retention of ISO accreditation.

There were no further questions or comments raised by members following the update and it was resolved that the minutes and key issues arising be received and noted.

COR/72/23 Minutes of the Sustainability Committee held on 12 June 2023

The Link Governor for Sustainability referred members to the previously circulated minutes and provided an overview of the key issues considered by the Sustainability Committee held on 12 June 2023.

Attention was drawn to the action log and the good progress being made therein. Issues were highlighted in respect of attaining increased membership of the group from curriculum colleagues and the priority be placed on energy reduction.

It was noted that to support energy reduction only one building per campus would be open during holiday periods.

Minute No.

There were no questions or comments raised by members following the update and it was resolved that the Minutes and key issues arising be received and noted.

COR/73/23 Governor Links and Learning Walks Update

Members were referred to the previously circulated reports arising from the Governor Link visits as follows: -

- Marketing and External Relations
- Employer Engagement
- Higher Education
- Education Programmes for Young People
- FE Student Engagement
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Progression Curriculum and SEND (including Provision High Needs)
- Adult Education and Apprenticeships
- Sustainability and Estates

The Chairperson commented on the wealth of information within the reports and thanked everyone for their hard work and effort.

There were no questions or comments raised by the members and following due consideration it was resolved that the reports arising from the Governor Link visits be received and noted.

COR/74/23 External Governance Review 2023 – Progress Update

The CS referred members to the previously circulated update report in respect of the External Governance Review 2023.

The following was highlighted: -

- that the process commenced earlier and the CS had worked with PB and his team to attain the current level of progress
- to date 40 questionnaires had been completed by internal and external stakeholders
- meetings had been held with a range of external stakeholders, key members of personnel, members, Staff and Student Members as well as co-opted members
- visits had taken place to the Altrincham and Stockport campuses.

There was confirmation that the review constituted a substantial piece of work. The CS added that he and the Chairperson were scheduled to meet with PB on 8 August 2023 following completion of the first draft report. It was noted that the final report and outcomes would be available in advance of the 20 September 2023 meeting of the Board of the Corporation.

The CS placed on record his thanks for the way in which PB had conducted the review which had been in a very professional manner.

Minute No.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the progress update in respect of the External Governance Review 2023 be received and noted.

COR/75/23 Resignation of Independent Member of the Board of the Corporation

The CS reported the resignation of Lina Tsui-Cheung (LT-C). It was noted that LT-C was an early participant of the Governor Development Programme and initially became a governor at Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College before transferring across to TTCG.

Members placed on record their thanks to LT-C for her contributions during her tenure as a governor and wished her well for the future.

There were no further questions or comments from members and it was resolved that the resignation of LT-C as an Independent Member of the Board of the Corporation be received and noted.

COR/76/23 Financial Regulations 2023/2024

The CFO referred member to the updated Financial Regulations 2023/2024 as previously circulated within the supplementary documentation.

There was confirmation that the Financial Regulations had been considered by the Resources Committee and were commended to the Board of the Corporation for approval. The CFO further confirmed that the changes mainly related to those associated with ONS classification.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Financial Regulations 2023/2024 be approved and adopted for implementation.

Action: Chief Finance Officer

COR/77/23 Redundancy Policy 2023/2025

The VPCSP referred members to the previously circulated report, as prepared by the Director of Human Resources and Performance Management (DHRPM), and the proposed updated Redundancy Policy. It was noted that a copy of the proposed Policy had been provided within the supplementary pack of papers.

There was confirmation that the Policy had been considered by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 June 2023 and further that consultation had been undertaken with the trade unions.

It was noted that a summary of changes had been provided within the supporting report but that there were no significant proposed changes to the content. It was added that updated Policy largely reflected a revised layout and changes reflective of the size of the organisation.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Redundancy Policy 2023/2025 be approved and adopted for implementation.

Minute No.

Action: Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning/Director of Human Resources and Performance Management

COR/78/23 Treasury Management Policy 2023/2025

The CFO referred members to the updated Treasury Management Policy (TMP) 2023/2025 as previously circulated within the supplementary documentation.

The CFO reported that the TMP had been considered by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 June 2023. There was confirmation that the proposed changes had been highlighted with the appended document.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Treasury Management Policy 2023/2025 be approved and adopted for implementation.

Action: Chief Finance Officer

COR/79/23 FE Admissions Policy 2023/2025

The Deputy Principal referred members to the previously circulated report and proposed FE Admissions Policy 2023/2025 as circulated within the supplementary documentation.

There was confirmation that the proposed Policy had been considered at the meeting of the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 28 June 2023. Reference was further made to the summary of key changes as detailed in the covering report.

The inclusion of a section on apprenticeships was highlighted as well as the added clarity in relation to entry requirements, in particular those specific to a particular programme.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the FE Admissions Policy 2023/2025 be approved and adopted for implementation.

Action: Deputy Principal

COR/80/23 Child Protection and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy 2023/2024

The DP referred members to the previously circulated report and the proposed Child Protection and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy 2023/2024 as circulated within the supplementary documentation.

The DP reported that the proposed Policy had been considered by the Safeguarding Committee. It was further confirmed that a summary of the key changes had been presented in the supporting report and further that the appended Policy included the proposed changes highlighted in yellow. It was noted that in the main the changes related to the updating of terminology as well as changes to reflect the latest guidance and good practice.

Minute No.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A question was asked by a member in relation to the provision of information and how checks would be undertaken in relation to on-line activity.

The VPCSP responded that this aspect was addressed within the Policy with cross referencing to online safety guidance documents as appropriate.

- Clarity was sought by a member in relation to the designated roles and the ease of identification of named individuals.

The DP clarified that the Policy document made reference to positions rather than names. It was further confirmed that information around the named individuals was available via the Group's website (Safeguarding tab) and was further reinforced via the regular Safeguarding Bulletins.

The Chairperson further made reference to the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023 documents which would be circulated to members and would require confirmation that all governors had read and understood the content.

Action: Corporation Secretary

There were no further questions or comments raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Child Protection and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults 2023/2024 be approved and adopted for implementation.

Action: Deputy Principal

COR/81/23 Health and Safety Policy 2023/2024

The VPCSP referred members to the previously circulated report and the proposed Health and Safety Policy 2023/2024.

The VPCSP confirmed that only minor changes had been made to the Policy with respect to updated personnel changes and supporting documentation.

It was noted that the Policy set out the specific responsibilities for health and safety which were monitored by the Health and Safety Committee. It was further stated that the Policy Statement, combined within the Policy, provided a summary of the Corporation's responsibilities and commitments and that this statement was on public display across the Group's sites.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Health and Safety Policy 2023/2024 be approved and adopted for implementation.

Action: Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning

Minute No.**COR/82/23 Student Engagement Strategy 2023/2024**

The DP referred members to the previously circulated report and an updated one-year Student Engagement Strategy for the period 2023/2024.

There was confirmation that the Strategy had been considered at the meeting of the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 28 June 2023. Members noted that there were no proposed changes to the current strategy and an extension of one further year to the Strategy was being sought.

Clarity was provided that during the 2023/2024 academic year it was proposed that the Student Engagement Strategy would be reviewed to reflect the Group's new Strategic Plan, the changes in the educational landscape, the LSIP and the needs of the Group's students, which continued to evolve.

There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that an extension, for the 2023/2024 academic year, of the Student Engagement Strategy be approved.

Action: Deputy Principal

COR/83/23 Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 14 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting were received and the Chairperson of the Committee provided a brief overview of the business items considered by the Committee.

The Chairperson drew attention to the following;

- that EM had been nominated and approved to be the Chairperson of the Committee from the beginning of the new academic year for the period 2023/2025
- consideration of the Higher Skills Strategy Action Plan update and the alignments taking place with the Greater Manchester (GM) Strategy
- the issues in relation to student numbers
- the discussions that had taken place around Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- the HE CDAR, which had been undertaken for the first time, and from which there were 14 recommendations arising
- the positive news around the Access Participation Plan which had been extended for one further year.

There were no issues or comments raised by members and it was resolved that the minutes be received and noted.

COR/84/23 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

COR/85/23 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting were received and noted and the Chairperson of the Committee provided a brief overview of the business items considered by the Committee.

Minute No.

The Chairperson also referred to the earlier considerations and resolutions of the Board of the Corporation, as also considered and recommended for approval by the Committee, in respect of the CFO Report and Management Accounts; the Draft Budget 2023/2024 and Financial Forecast 2023/2025; Redundancy Policy 2023/2024; and Treasury Management Policy 2023/2025.

There were no issues or comments raised by members and it was resolved that the minutes be received and noted.

COR/86/23**Matters Arising from the Minutes****i) RES/41/23 – Higher Education Fees 2024/2025**

Reference as made to the considerations of the Committee in relation to the Higher Education Fees 2024/2025 including the summary of key issues.

It was noted that no increase to the HE fees in 2024/2025 being proposed.

There were no questions or comments from members and the Board of the Corporation unanimously approved the Resources Committee's recommendation that the Higher Education Fees 2024/2025 be approved and duly implemented.

Action: Deputy Principal

There were no further matters arising from the minutes.

COR/87/23**Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 26 June 2023**

The minutes of the meeting were received and noted and the Chairperson of the Committee provided a brief overview of the business items considered by the Committee.

The Chairperson of the Committee drew attention to the following:

- the resignation of LT-C and welcoming of a new Co-opted Member to the Committee (MS)
- the Internal Audit visits conducted in respect of Business Continuity (Design Moderate and generally a sound system of control with 3 recommendations arising); Bursary Administration (Design Moderate and generally a sound system of internal control with 3 recommendations arising); Procurement (Design Moderate and generally a sound system of control with 4 recommendations arising); and Follow Up within which 12 (88%) out of the 15 recommendations had been completed with the remaining recommendations being in progress
- consideration of the Draft Internal Audit Report 2022/2023
- consideration of the Audit Needs Assessment 2023/2026 as presented by the new Internal Auditor (Beever and Struthers) and which incorporated Business Critical Controls
- consideration of the Draft External Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ending 31 July 2023 which the Committee commended to the Board of the Corporation

Minute No.

- an update on the Board Assurance and Risk Management Framework 2022/2023 as considered earlier in the meeting
- a review of the Audit Tracker and the management actions arising from audit reports.

There were no issues or comments raised by members and it was resolved that the minutes be received and noted.

COR/88/23**Matters Arising****i) AUD/22/23 - Internal Audit Reports – Visit 2**

There were no questions or comments raised by members and the Board of the Corporation unanimously approved the Audit Committee's recommendation that the Internal Audit Report (Business Continuity; Bursary Administration; Procurement; and Follow Up) be approved.

ii) AUD/23/23 – Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/2023

There were no questions or comments raised by members and the Board of the Corporation unanimously approved the Audit Committee's recommendation that the Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/2023 be approved.

iii) AUD/24/23 – Audit Needs Assessment 2023/2026

There were no questions or comments raised by members and the Board of the Corporation unanimously approved the Audit Committee's recommendation that the Audit Needs Assessment 2023/2026 be approved.

iv) AUD/25/23 – Draft External Audit Memorandum Year Ending 31 July 2023

There were no questions or comments raised by members and the Board of the Corporation unanimously approved the Audit Committee's recommendation that the Draft External Audit Memorandum Year Ending 31 July 2023 be approved.

COR/89/23**Update of the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 28 June 2023**

The Chairperson of the Committee presented an overview of the key areas of consideration by the Committee at its meeting held on 28 June 2023.

The following was highlighted:

- the first meeting of SVdV in her capacity as a Co-opted Member
- the very strong contribution from the Student Member attendees who were invited to comment on their experiences as students
- consideration of the Curriculum Development Area Review (CDAR) in respect of Code Nation
- a summary review of CDAR activity over the course of the academic year during which 13 CDARs had been completed
- consideration of the Student Experience Update Report within which the significant progress around careers appointments was noted

Minute No.

- a Student Support update and an aspect of note in relation to exclusions of which there had been an increase largely due to behavioural issues post Covid
- a review of the FE Admissions Policy 2023/2024.

There were no questions or comments raised by members and it was resolved the areas of consideration by the Committee be noted.

COR/90/23 Any Other Business

There were no other items raised under any other business.

COR/91/23 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board of the Corporation would be held on 20 September 2023 at 5.30pm in the Aspire Restaurant at the Altrincham Campus. There was confirmation that there would be a single agenda item in respect of the final report arising from the External Governance Review.

It was further noted that the next scheduled full meeting of the Board of the Corporation would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 18 October 2023.

Action: Corporation Secretary

The meeting closed at 7.44pm.

The Director of Marketing and External Relations left the meeting at 5.39pm following consideration of agenda item 2a.

Ayo Oyebode joined the meeting at 5.50pm during consideration of agenda item 3a.

Alison Hewitt joined the meeting at 5.52pm during consideration of agenda item 3a.