

TRAFFORD & STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting
held on Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 3.15pm
via Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Louise Richardson Alison Hewitt James Scott Jill Bottomley Graham Luccock Jonathan O'Brien Lewis Ormston Nick Wroe	(Chair) (Vice Chair) (Chief Executive Officer)
In Attendance:	Rebecca Clare Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava Naomi Harrop Michelle Leslie Yvonne Riley Lyndsay Sheridan Henry Taylor-Toone Mark Watson Kelly Wright	(Corporation Secretary) (Group Principal) (Director of Human Resources and Performance) (Chief People Officer) (Assistant Corporation Secretary) (Director of Finance) (Chief Finance and Operations Officer) (Director of Estates) (Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and Performance)

Minute No:**RES/14/25 Apologies for Absence**

The Corporation Secretary (CS) reported that there were no apologies for absence.

The Chair welcomed Nick Wroe to his first Committee meeting.

RES/15/25 Declarations of Interest

The Director of Finance declared an interest in relation to Stockport County as previously recorded in the Register of Interest.

There were no further declarations of either direct or indirect interest in any of the meeting's business items.

RES/16/25 Minutes of the Resource Committee Meeting held on 12 February 2025

The minutes of the meeting were approved and accepted as a correct account of the proceedings.

RES/17/25 Matters Arising from the Minutes

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

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It was confirmed that the majority of actions had been completed or would be covered through the business items or were future actions.

The following matters were raised by members:

RES/04/25 Matters Arising from the minutes 12 February 2025

RES/52/24 – In relation to the developments between Stockport County and Life Leisure in respect of the Woodley site, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) advised that it was understood that Stockport Council had now taken control of the site. It was confirmed that the Group would continue to link in with the Council and Stockport County in respect of the arrangement to continue to provide education on the site following the end of the lease. The PCEO advised that the Group would monitor and provide mitigations should the need arise.

The Director of Finance (DoF) advised that they had met with the new Financial Director at Stockport County in relation to the subcontracting arrangement and asked that they keep the Group updated on any agreements with the Council.

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

RES/18/25 People and Culture Update

The Director of Human Resources and Performance (DHRP) referred members to the previously circulated people and culture update report and presentation.

The presentation covered the following:

- Summary and Key Themes
- Our People Demographics
- Key Metrics
- Strategic Initiatives Update

The DHRP drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- The People and Culture KPIs remain healthy in relation to the 2024-2025 targets.
- Improved staff utilisation (based on timetable data) from 89% last term to 95% current term.
- Positive trends seen with turnover and absence rates for colleagues. The DHRP advised that initiatives around workload, wellbeing, and absence management were contributing to this improvement.
- Employee voice to be captured via the Group's annual survey with results anticipated in June 2025.
- EDI data disclosure improving.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

Action: Director of Human Resources and Performance

A member noted that the report did not provide detailed reasons for resignations among permanent staff with less than two years of service and the DHRP outlined the constraints within the survey and agreed to look into the matter for future reports.

A member questioned unknown main reason for absences and the DHRP and the Chief People Officer (CPO) noted that the absence management system requires employees to report their absence but that sometimes the reason for absence is not recorded. The

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DHRP outlined the absence management process and confirmed that line managers make contact with staff following an absence report to discuss reasons and any support requirements. The CPO emphasised the importance of balancing the need for detailed information with a system that is not overly bureaucratic to ensure effective management of attendance. The CPO further advised of the requirement in respect of employee contracts and absence reporting.

A member raised a question in relation to compliance with absence management policies and a multiyear view of sickness absence, suggesting that analysing data over 2-3 years could uncover patterns or any persistent behaviour. The DHRP advised of the absence management process which included tracking over a 12-month rolling period. It was confirmed that absence data is monitored via weekly reports and leadership reviews to identify and address any areas of concern.

A member noted the level of detail that sits behind absence reporting and enquired as to who owns absence management. The DHRP confirmed that managers own the management of absence. It was highlighted that HR supports where necessary. The DHRP noted that whilst some managers manage the process well, others are still evolving or new to their roles. The DHRP highlighted that managers are required to attend business review meetings to discuss their data and that this reinforces their ownership of the people management process. The CPO advised that HR would be involved where individuals hit absence triggers to ensure that attendance is managed effectively.

A member suggested examining the correlation between unknown absences and the ownership of absence management and highlighted the importance of understanding the patterns within absences, such as the proportion of certified versus self-certified absences and the distinction between short-term intermittent absences and long-term absences.

The CPO clarified that the average length of absence is 8 days per employee over a 12-month period which has seen a decrease over the previous year.

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the People and Culture Update be received and noted.

RES/19/25**EDI Annual Plan 2025-2025 Progress Update**

The Chief People Officer (CPO) referred members to the previously circulated report and progress against the 2024-2025 annual plan.

The CPO confirmed that it was the final year of the current Strategy.

The CPO advised that an ambitious plan had been developed for 2024-2025 with multiple actions and targets against four EDI strands.

The CPO confirmed that, as with the development of the strategy and plan, there has been active engagement in monitoring outcomes by the EDI Committee. It was noted that membership includes colleagues from a range of areas, a governor representative and student representatives.

It was confirmed that, following the most recent Board meeting, an action had been given to highlight EDI targets more clearly and add additional targets, if and where

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appropriate. The CPO reported that it was felt that the targets were not sufficiently clear given the extensive volume of actions, and advised that, the EDI Committee would therefore undertake a review at the next scheduled Committee meeting.

The CPO reported that positive progress had been made against several key actions but that clarification on some outstanding actions was still required and would be addressed at the next EDI Committee.

The CPO drew the Committee's attention to the following key highlights:

- Strategic Plan 2024/2030 – Equality Diversity and Inclusion now central to the Group's decision-making and strategic direction. The CPO highlighted that this integration extends to various strategies, including but not limited to, the Estates, Community Responsiveness, and Digital Strategies.
- Significant efforts made to support the curriculum, with proactive measures such as the 'Step into Learning' initiative.
- In response to the Group's aim to support vulnerable students to transition into college, 409 learners have undergone transition in preparation for 2025/2026 academic year, including 209 high need leaners.
- Improvements in disclosure rates. It was confirmed that efforts continue to encourage more staff to disclose their information.
- The aim to adopt best practices from the Higher Education model, particularly in relation to the access and participation, and extend these to Further Education.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member raised a question in relation to protected characteristics, non-disclosure and the resulting lack of intelligence. The member suggested that understanding the reasons behind non-disclosure could provide valuable insights and proposed sub-analysing the percentage of non-disclosure into categories such as those who explicitly choose not to disclose versus those who might disclose if asked directly. It was noted that this approach would help identify the underlying reasons for non-disclosure e.g. whether it is due to privacy concerns, fear of discrimination, or simply a lack of awareness about the importance of sharing this information. The CPO thanked the member for their suggestions and highlighted ongoing measures to improve disclosure rates, including campaigns to explain the importance and use of the data, and collaboration with trade unions to provide further assurance.

The member advised of work undertaken around behavioural insights and offered support in relation to the design of the form that could potentially lead to different and measurable outputs, potentially improving the results.

- A member enquired about the impact of the recent Supreme Court judgment on the Group's strategy and day-to-day operations, particularly concerning trans and gender issues. The CPO advised that the Group follows the 2010 Act, which includes gender reassignment as a protected characteristic. It was noted that the Group adopts a pragmatic and sensitive approach, ensuring safe spaces and respecting the dignity of all individuals. The CPO advised that the Group does not anticipate any major changes to the policy or strategy due to the Supreme Court ruling.

Action: Chief People Officer

- A member raised a question in relation to the timeline for the new strategy and the CPO confirmed that the work on the new strategy would commence over the

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summer, with the aim to have the strategy finalised towards the end of the calendar year.

There were no questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the EDI Annual Plan 2025-2025 Progress Update be received and noted.

RES/20/25**Sustainability Update**

The Chief People Officer (CPO) referred members to the previously circulated report and update on progress against the sustainability annual plan for 2024-2025.

It was confirmed that the annual plan had been developed following consultation with key internal stakeholders and approved by governors. It was noted that aligned to the strategy, actions had been set across four strategic themes as highlighted in the plan.

The Sustainability Committee monitors progress against the plan.

The CPO reported that the Group continues to engage with key partners such as GMCA and AoC.

Challenges included the Group's ability to report on scope 2 and 3 emissions and embedding education for sustainable development for curriculum areas.

Key achievements included:

- Short green courses have started to gain momentum, and three groups were recruited for electrical standards.
- Increased staff and student engagement around the Green Agenda with much higher participation during Green Week than previous years.
- Lighting upgrade at the Altrincham campus close to completion.
- EV charging now available at 4 campuses (it will be included as part of the Cheadle redevelopment works).
- Estate strategy which includes objectives to achieve a more sustainable estate was approved recently by the Board of the Corporation.
- Cheadle project on track to achieve BREEAM excellent and a bio-diversity net gain.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member enquired about measures to maintain the momentum from the increased engagement during Green Week, and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) highlighted upcoming high-profile events, such as the GMCA Climate Summit to be hosted at Stockport campus and the externally funded carbon literacy training for staff and students.
- A member enquired about accessing public sector decarbonisation funds and the CPO advised, that whilst the Group had benefited from DfE grants, there was a need to be more proactive in seeking additional funding sources but highlighted capacity challenges. The member highlighted the possibility of partnering with organisations to support with applications and accessing funds.

There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the Sustainability Update be received and noted.

Minute No:**RES/21/25 Learner Numbers and Funding Update**

The Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and Performance (APPFP) presented a report which provided a summary update in relation to the current position with recruitment in relation to learner numbers and predicted learner funding income.

The APPFP drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- 16-19 current recruitment is at 96% of the target and 99% of the allocation with an additional 19 learners recruited since previous reporting period.
- T level recruitment against target, remains at 58%. The confirmed clawback of £138K, accounted for in the management accounts.
- Recently received allocation for next year, with allocation decreased by 55 learners, but income has increased due to higher programme funding and more learners with English and maths needs.
- Adult skills fund enrolments have increased since the previous report. Termly tracking for this funding stream continues and is on track.
- Apprenticeships planned starts against internal department tracker (including pipeline activity) are in line with the expected delivery plan.
- Higher Education (HE) and Advanced Learner Loan Income no change since previously reported.
- Level 3 Local Skills anticipated to be £235K above the £350K allocation. It was noted that GMCA will not fund over delivery this year.

The CEO highlighted frustrations in relation to the Level 3 Adult Education funding and made reference to discussions to rebalance against indicative allocations to improve the position in 2025/2026.

A member raised a question in relation to the significant decrease in student financial support in the summary of funding allocations. The APPFP clarified that the reduction was due to the exclusion of the free meals' allocation, which would be included and would ensure that the overall allocation remains in line.

There were no further questions or issues raised from members arising from the report and following due discussion and consideration it was resolved that the Learner Numbers and Funding update report be noted.

RES/22/25 Partner Subcontracting Mid-Year Update

The Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and performance (APPFP) referred members to the previously circulated report and update on the current position in relation to the Group's Partnership and Subcontracting activity during 2024-2025.

The APPFP advised that there was no change since it was previously reported with the exception of Xyrius Training which had increased from £172k to £350k to support the growing demand of GMCA resident requirements.

The following areas of activity were highlighted in the report:

16-19 Subcontracting

- Carrington Riding School, Debut Academy and Stockport County remain slightly under target. The Carrington Riding School arrangement is to conclude at the end of the academic year.

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- Flixton Girls' School remain on target, with the arrangement concluding at the end of the academic year.
- Learner numbers remain under plan for most programmes (-38), which results in a saving in non-pay expenditure.

16-19 Partnerships

- Altrincham Football Club remain on target.

Adult Skills Fund and Higher Education Subcontracting

- Xyrius Training commenced and is progressing well with extension to the contract recently agreed.
- OLC arrangements continue with all learning to conclude at the end of the academic year as planned.

Adult Partnerships

- Working Wonders remain on target, with an expected contribution to the Group of £414k.
- Code Nation below target by £163k, with an expected contribution to the Group of £113k.

An update of the planned funding and learner numbers for 2025/2026 was included in the report.

There were no questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the Partner Subcontracting Mid-Year Update be received and noted.

RES/23/25 Management Accounts P8 24/25 and High Level FY25/26 Budget Assumptions

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) referred members to the previously circulated report and financial position which included the P8 management accounts, financial position and a high-level view of FY25/26 Budget.

In relation to the P8 management accounts and financial position, key issues highlighted included:

P8 Education EBITDA Forecast

- Underlying education EBITDA target was £5.2 million, with an overall target of £3.6 million.
- Pay to income ratio is increasing due to additional funding.

Risks and Opportunities

- Risk reserve reduced from £1.5 million to £1 million.
- Opportunities include potential National Insurance funding to be confirmed in May 2025.

Financial Health and Covenants

- Financial Health moving into Outstanding due to the forecast cash position. However, it was noted that this was based on timing of Cheadle New Build Payments so may go down.
- Performance and Borrowing both down due to higher revenue decreasing the ratio.
- Significant headroom across all covenants.

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A member sought clarification in relation to the red line in the financial forecast and the CFOO confirmed that the red line represents a worst-case scenario, assuming that all identified risks materialise. It was noted that this scenario was used to illustrate the potential impact of multiple risks but was not considered realistic.

A member asked about potential risks associated with pay following the independent pay review body's recommendation of a 4% pay increase. The CFOO referred to the current three-year plan pay assumptions, and the CEO commented on the Group's competitive position compared to FE sector pay. It was stated that although the pay review body's recommendation may influence expectations, the government does not directly determine the pay rate. The CEO confirmed that AoC recommendations would be considered in any discussions.

In relation to the High Level FY25/26 Budget key issues highlighted included:

Underlying EBITDA Forecast

- 16 -19: despite not meeting recruitment targets, a base rate increase of £2.5 million is expected to mitigate risks.
- Adult Skills Fund: increase in GMCA allocation
- Apprenticeships and HE – reasonable growth - targeting a 2% year on year increase.
- Commercial growth.
- Pay Award: assumed 3% pay award, plus incremental pay increases.
- Woodley site: lease ending in December 2025 represents 7 months' saving.
- Investment in New Roles: significant investment in new roles, particularly in curriculum and some in enabling areas, to support growth.

Profit and Loss

- FY25/26: contingency of up to £1.5m to retain £3.6m Ed. EBITDA.
- Pay: income (excluding subcontracting) increasing 0.5% year on year and 0.2% higher than plan due to the investment in new roles. The CEO provided reassurance regarding the pay to income ratio, highlighting that part of the increase was due to the additional teaching roles.

Action: Chief Finance and Operations Officer

In relation to the increase in pay to income ratio it was requested that the CFOO would highlight the impact of the increase in new staff to meet needs without additional funding to assist in discussions with relevant bodies.

Cash and Capital Expenditure

- Cash: underlying increase of £1.4m
- Capital: £3.9m (excl. Cheadle New Build) across self-funded and the DfE allocation.
- £2.4 million from the DfE grant for condition improvement. Grant to be spent over three years, providing a strong position for upcoming projects.

A member raised a question in relation to capital investment and improvements to IT. The CFOO confirmed the development of a three-year capital plan and advised that spending needs would be defined once the new Chief Technology Officer was in post.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following consideration it was resolved that the Management Accounts P8 24/25 and High Level FY25/26 Budget Assumptions be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

Minute No:**RES/24/25 OfS/DfE Capital Funding update**

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) referred members to the previously circulated report and capital funding update.

There was confirmation of the position in relation to Office for Students (OfS) and Department of Education (DfE) capital projects within which it was reported that good progress was being made across all grants.

Key points highlighted included:

- **Office for Students (OfS) Capital and Recurrent Grants:** That the Group had successfully bid for £1.75m in 2022, with plans for HTQ delivery and capital resources. In addition, the Group will receive £86k in recurrent OfS Capital.

The CFOO advised that the capital grant had now concluded with the final report submitted.

- **DfE Energy Efficiency Grant:** The remaining spend for lighting upgrades in Altrincham and Stockport now complete with return due end of April.
- **T-Level Specialist Equipment:** The Creative and Design T-Level is not running in FY24/25, so an extension until December 2025 was requested and granted. The £141,960 deferred relates solely to this T-Level stream.
- **Apprenticeships Growth:** £45,000 allocation for the purchase of Lathing and Milling machines used in the delivery of engineering apprenticeships and contingent on confirming 15 new starts before the end of the year.
- **LSIF:** The LSIF fund was awarded in September 2023 in collaboration with other GM colleges. The planned spend includes construction equipment and CAVE installations at Cheadle and Stockport

The CFO reported on the Stockport CAVE overspend of £62k and advised that this is being covered by the Group's self-funded capital contingency.

- **FE College Condition Allocation:** Grant agreement signed and returned to DfE with funds expected by the 20 June 2025.

The CFOO reported that the grant is to be spent by 31 March 2028 and advised that the Group were currently working on a 3-year capital plan (that will accompany the FY25/26 Budget and 3-year financial plan) to show how this grant will be used.

There were no questions or issues raised by members and following consideration it was resolved that the Capital Funding update be received and noted.

RES/25/25 Procurement Strategy

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) referred members to the previously circulated report and changes to the Procurement Strategy.

It was confirmed that the main change was in relation to the addition of Section 5 (strategy compliance with the Procurement Contracts Regulations 2023).

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The CFOO reported that the Group had engaged a Procurement Consultant to ensure Group compliance and the embedding of new regulations within the organisation.

Next steps included:

- Increased use of Purchasing Consortium as a more efficient way of engaging suppliers.
- Investment in additional finance business partnering to support Budget Holders with making more considered procurement choices and having a longer-term view of future purchasing requirements.
- Create a 3-5 year Capital and Non-Capital plan for the Estates department (the Group's largest spender) to ensure we procure ahead of time and look for efficiencies both in terms of the procuring process and also in terms of expenditure.

In response to question on the 2038 net zero target, the CFOO confirmed that the strategy supports the net zero target.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following consideration it was resolved that the Procurement Strategy be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/26/25 Supply Chain and Fees Charges Policy/ Fees Policy

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the Supply Chain and Fee Charging Policy 2025-2026 and the Fees Policy 2025-2026, ahead of the FY25/26

Members were directed to the copies of the proposed policies and the tracked changes therein.

It was noted there were no significant changes proposed in relation to policies with changes reflecting the removal of the ESFA (now part of DfE) and updates to reflect any funding guideline changes.

In relation to the Fees Policy, it was noted that Section 4.9 had been further updated since previously circulated with the hourly rate for tailored learning recalculated and increased to better align with current costs.

There were no questions or comments raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the following policies be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval:

- a. Supply Chain and Fee Charges Policy 2025-2026
- b. Fees Policy 2025-2026

RES/27/25 Treasury Management Policy

The Director of Finance (DoF) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the Treasury Management Policy which would be effective from 1 August 2025.

The following changes were highlighted in the report:

- Section 2.2: Section for sensitivity analysis included as recommended by the recent internal audit.

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- Section 2.2: Reduced minimum cash balance reduction from the month of March removed. It was noted that the main funding is now received in equal instalments throughout the year and that this eliminates the need for a reduced minimum cash balance in March.
- Section 2.1: Inclusion of a new opportunity to be able to seek investment opportunities outside of the main banking arena and into other investment platforms. It was noted that this would allow the Group to effectively manage cash across multiple investment opportunities, which can spread the risk.
- Use of investments that specialise in charity funds and sustainable/ethical investments to support SP4

A member asked a question in relation to the parameters for spreading investments across different platforms to ensure they are safe and not at risk of losing money. The DoF advised that the Group would only use accredited financial institutions, and approval would be sought from the Resources Committee prior to using any institutions outside the approved main banking arenas.

There were no further questions or comments raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Treasury Management Policy be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/28/25**Redundancy Policy**

The Director of HR and Performance (DHRP) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the Redundancy Policy 2025-2027.

Members were directed to the highlighted changes therein.

It was noted there were no significant changes and that updates reflected the following:

- Changes in legislation to reflect the extended redundancy protection period for pregnant employees or those taking maternity leave and those undertaking adoption leave or utilising 6 weeks of continuous shared parental leave, whereby they take precedence over colleagues where suitable alternative work is available for a period of 18 months.
- Employee Assistance contact details.

The CEO raised a question in relation to the Redundancy Policy and any changes or implications due to managing public money. Clarity was sought as to whether there would be any impact on statutory versus enhanced redundancy payments. The DHRP responded that the policy reflects custom and practice, and whilst it was not stipulated in the contract of employment, it would likely require consultation to remove it. The CPO added that the Policy reflects Group procedure and that redundancy payments have not been flagged as a potential concern in legal advice.

There were no further questions or comments raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Redundancy Policy 2025-2027 be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/29/25**Updated Resources Committee Terms of Reference 2024/2026**

The Corporation Secretary (CS) referred members to the previously circulated proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

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Members were directed to the tracked changes therein.

The CS highlighted proposed revisions in relation to declaration of interests (1.3) and the addition of the reporting of Insurance Claims and the approval of the Insurance Renewal on an annual basis (2.14). The CS advised that the internal auditors had made a recommendation that Insurance Renewals and Claims be included in the Terms of Reference.

It was confirmed that the Terms of Reference for the Committee would be kept in line with other committees and would be reviewed at the original scheduled date.

A member raised a question in relation to governor quorum requirements for the Resources Committee and whether it should be listed in the Terms of Reference. The CS clarified the terminology and advised that governor quorum requirements (Section 6) were covered under the term 'members'.

There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Committee be recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/30/25 Any Other Business

It was confirmed that the following items had been deferred until the next meeting:

Items deferred to the next meeting - to note

- Insurance Renewal
- Financial Regulations

There were no further matters raised under any other business.

RES/31/25 Date of Next Meeting

The Corporation Secretary advised that the next meeting of the Resources Committee would be held on Wednesday 18 June 2025 via MS Teams

The meeting closed at 4.24pm.