TRAFFORD & STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting
held on Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 5.03pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Lewis Ormston	(Chair)
	Jill Bottomley	
	Alison Hewitt	(Vice Chair)
	Graham Luccock	
	Jonathan O'Brien	
	Louise Richardson	
	James Scott	(Chief Executive Officer)
In Attendance:	Rebecca Clare	(Corporation Secretary)
	Kerry Burton	(Director of Finance)
	Rick Farrow	(Chief Technology Officer)
	Michelle Leslie	(Chief People Officer)
	Yvonne Riley	(Assistant Corporation Secretary)
	Henry Taylor-Toone	(Chief Finance and Operations Officer)
	Kelly Wright	(Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and Performance)

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It was confirmed that member Lewis Ormston would be chairing the meeting to support succession planning.

RES/01/26 Apologies for Absence

It was confirmed that apologies for absence had been received from Nick Wroe.

It was reported that apologies had also been received from the Group Principal and the Director of People and Culture who were unable to attend the meeting.

The recently appointed Director of Finance was welcomed to the meeting.

RES/02/26 Declarations of Interest

ACTION: Governor JB/Chief Finance and Operations Officer/Corporation Secretary
In relation to item 7.1, a member confirmed that she had enquired about a booking for the CAVE at Altrincham. The Corporation Secretary to check the commercial terms with the CFOO and CCO and the governor to confirm details to be recorded to the register of interest.

RESOLVED: It was confirmed that there were no further declarations of either direct or indirect interest in any of the meeting's business items.

RES/03/26 Minutes of the Resource Committee Meeting held on 12 November 2025 *(Previously circulated)*

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

Minute No:

RES/04/26 **Matters Arising from the Minutes Proforma** *(Previously circulated)*

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

RESOLVED: All actions were confirmed as closed, with the exception of one ongoing action relating to analysis of resignation data for permanent staff with less than two years' service, which remained under review by the Director of People and Culture.

RES/05/26 **Mid-Year Update on Year 1 of the People and Culture Strategy** *(Previously circulated)*

The Chief People Officer (CPO) reported on progress against the People and Culture Strategy and five year plan 2025/2030, which included an illustrative roadmap attached as supporting documentation.

A RAG-rated summary against the six strategic objectives was provided, with the majority of actions rated Green or Amber.

Areas of progress included wellbeing, performance management initiatives and leadership development, including coaching, competency, support and work around behaviours. The launch of the Group's Shadow Board was highlighted, with an initial focus aligned to the Group's civic 'Together We Care' purpose. Workforce planning was reported as an emerging area of development, linked to curriculum planning.

The Committee discussed the shift towards a coaching led culture and how it would empower individuals, including the introduction of a mindsets and behaviours coaching tool to support individual and team development. The Committee welcomed the move away from traditional appraisal models and noted the importance of translating strategic intent into operational practice. The CPO confirmed that work was underway, supported by external consultancy, to strengthen communication and relevance, increase staff engagement, and ensure that strategy was clearly understood as practical and meaningful at an individual level, including through initiatives such as the Shadow Board.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) commented on the People and Culture work and the need for shift in mindset following two mergers. It was highlighted that leaders had, understandably, defaulted to solving problems for colleagues, but that the Strategy sought to move towards a coaching led culture in which individuals were accountable and supported to find solutions themselves. The CEO emphasised the intention to rebalance approach from one rooted primarily in kindness to one based on care, with clearer expectations and responsibility whilst remaining supportive and values driven.

A member asked whether the People and Culture work included a focus on resilience, noting the importance of supporting individuals to manage their own challenges alongside a caring approach. The CPO confirmed that resilience and personal accountability formed part of the wider emphasis on empowerment and ownership. The CPO reported that whilst the Group provides strong wellbeing support and was regarded as a supportive employer, there was also an expectation that professional staff take responsibility for their practice and make effective use of the support available, reflecting the balance between care, accountability and performance.

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RES/06/26 **Mid-Year Update on Year 1 of EDIB Strategy** *(Previously circulated)*

The Chief People Officer (CPO) reported on progress against the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Strategy 2025/2030.

Positive progress was confirmed with no areas RAG rated Red.

It was confirmed that timelines and priorities may be adjusted slightly following further consultation with the EDIB Committee to ensure responsiveness to stakeholder feedback.

Progress highlighted included access and participation audits, which had provided a strengthened analytical framework extended from Higher Education across the FE provision and continued development activity relating to staffing, flexible working and fair pay in light of the forthcoming employment legislation.

RES/07/26 **Sustainability Update Report including update on the Extension of the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy to 2030** *(Previously circulated)*

The Chief People Officer (CPO) reported on progress against the Sustainability Annual Plan for 2025/2026.

It was confirmed that the Group remained committed to embedding sustainability into all aspects of its operations and curriculum.

Areas of progress included curriculum integration, engagement activity, energy efficiency initiatives, carbon monitoring and community partnerships. Improvements in BREEAM performance, emissions reporting and student engagement.

The Committee welcomed the update in relation to external initiatives and the work being undertaken with the Climate Ambassador, a former student who was now supporting the Group with the climate action plan. It was reported that plans for more student involvement via the Responsible Futures Group were in development.

It was confirmed that planned estates improvements at Marple had been removed from scope due to changes in DfE funding eligibility.

Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy
The CPO confirmed that an initial draft of the extension to the Strategy to 2030 had been completed and was subject to consultation with the Sustainability Committee and relevant leaders prior to submission to the Board of the Corporation for approval. It was advised that this collaborative approach would ensure that the strategy was robust and reflected the views of all key stakeholders.

ACTION: Chief People Officer
Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy 2026/2030 to be presented to the Board of the Corporation for approval in April 2026.

RES/08/26 **Learner Numbers and Funding Update** *(Previously circulated)*

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The Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and Performance (APPFP) provided a summary update in relation to learner numbers and predicted learner funding income.

Key points highlighted included:

- 16–19 recruitment remained a key strength, with learner numbers forecast significantly above allocation, positioning the Group well for future funding growth and curriculum planning.
- T Level recruitment below allocation resulting in an in-year clawback.
- Adult Skills Fund delivery close to profile with targeted interventions underway.
- Apprenticeship starts slightly below target but broadly in line with plan, supported by continuing learners and achievement funding.
- Higher Education provision reported as stabilised but below target, highlighting an area for future strategic review.
- Advanced Learner Loans remained underutilised and unchanged from the previous report.
- Early modelling for future funding allocations (2026/27) indicated a positive outlook for the Group driven by higher learner numbers and improved retention.

A question was asked in relation to the value of continued growth in learner numbers where in-year funding was not guaranteed and it was confirmed that additional income for the current year could not be assumed and that this represented a known risk. The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFFO) advised that, whilst this may result in foregone income in the short term, maintaining higher learner numbers strengthened the Group's position for future funding allocations and provided longer term resilience.

A member commented on the inconsistency of the funding regime, highlighting the contrast between the absence of guaranteed in year growth funding and the application of clawback where targets such as T Levels had not been met.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that tailored learning delivery was below target, with targeted interventions in place and that this was not expected to have a significant impact on funding.

Strong concern was expressed in relation the wider national funding context for Further Education, including the impact on confidence across the sector.

ACTION: Chief Finance and Operations Officer
Final funding allocations to be reported to the Committee in June and to the Board of the Corporation in April if verified earlier.

RES/09/26 **Partner Subcontracting Update** *(Previously circulated)*

The Assistant Principal Planning, Funding and Performance (APPFP) reported on the current position in relation to the Group's Partnership and Subcontracting activity during 2025/2026.

It was confirmed that the Group remained compliant, proportionate and within regulatory thresholds, with no planned expansion for 2026/27.

A member commented that subcontracting arrangements were an area of increasing interest for Ofsted, noting that inspection focus was likely to extend beyond volume and

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compliance to assurance of quality. It was confirmed that, alongside existing assurance through the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee, the TLA Link governors would be undertaking a visit to review the Stockport County subcontracting arrangements, with a view to gaining further assurance ahead of any future inspection.

RES/10/26 **Management Accounts P7 25/26 and High-Level Budget Assumptions FY26/27** *(Previously circulated)*

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) reported on the financial position which included the P7 management accounts and a high-level view of FY25/26 Budget.

Supporting documentation included:
- P7 Management Accounts Presentation
- FY26/27 High Level Assumptions Presentation
- P7 Management Accounts

P7 Management Accounts
Key points highlighted included:
- Group remained on track to achieve its budget, with strong underlying cash generation and financial health forecast to remain outstanding.
- Principal in-year pressure related to pay costs due to successful recruitment and retention, reducing vacancy savings and increased likelihood of utilising the pay contingency.
- Staff-to-income ratio increasing, driven by income pressures, strategic investment in English and maths delivery, and pay award assumptions.
- Significant headroom against bank covenants.

A worst-case scenario was presented to provide assurance that the Group would remain financially resilient, with strong cash balances and good financial health maintained.

The CEO commented that pressures in relation to the pay-to-income ratio should be considered in the context of the Group delivering provision to a significant number of learners without corresponding in-year funding. It was emphasised that this wider funding context contributed to the current position and should be taken into account when reviewing in-year financial performance.

FY26/27 High Level Assumptions
Key points highlighted included:
- Positive financial outlook driven primarily by forecasted growth in 16–19 learner numbers and improved retention, resulting in a significant projected increase in income.
- Minimum Education EBITDA targeted in line with FE Commissioner benchmarks, in order to support financial resilience and enable strategic investment.
- Key priorities for 2026/27 included investment in pay and non-pay costs, automation, organisational agility and strategic projects, whilst maintaining appropriate contingency and strengthening underlying cash balances.

The CFOO reported that, subject to confirmation of final allocations, the Group was well positioned to invest in future growth, manage demographic risk and support longer term capital and strategic priorities.

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A member enquired whether the emerging geopolitical situation and associated risks, including potential increases in fuel and energy costs, had been factored into the 2026/27 assumptions. The CFOO advised that the Group was currently protected from energy price volatility, with gas and electricity contracts fixed until April 2027, and that interest rate movements were not expected to present a risk in the short term but would need to be reflected through appropriate future contingency planning

RESOLVED: Resources Committee recommended the Management Accounts P7 25/26 and High Level FY26/27 Budget Assumptions to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/11/26 **Capital Funding Update including Post 16 Capacity Funding** *(Previously circulated)*

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer reported on capital funding activity including Post 16 Capacity Funding.

Key points highlighted included:
- T-Level Specialist Equipment funds repaid to DfE for courses not running in 2025/26.
- Apprenticeships Growth allocation was not received due to unmet new start targets.
- FE College Condition Allocation funds received with the grant to be spent by 31 March 2028 with various projects already funded and further planned projects.

GMCA Sufficiency Grant (Post-16 Capacity Funding)
- Stockport Phase 4 works completed last Summer with further works planned for Summer 2026, funded by the FE College Condition Allocation and the Group's Self-Funded capital pot.
- Stretford plans drafted with works to commence following May half-term and completed/committed by September 2026. It was confirmed that the plans would create additional workshop and classroom spaces at Stretford as well as improving Learner Services and creating new social spaces.

The CEO commented that a further FE College Condition Allocation funding was expected to be announced in April and advised that this would be directed towards estates priorities.

RES/11/26 **Purchasing Report** *(Previously circulated)*

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) reported on purchasing over the value of £50,000 as required under the Financial Regulations.

Period 1-7 2025/26
A breakdown of the year to date was provided which included 43 invoices over £50k representing a spend of £6.4m. The main areas included Cheadle Redevelopment, RAAC remediation and Subcontractor/Partnerships. It was reported that other areas were in line with expectation with procurement exercises undertaken where required.

Full Year 2024/25
A breakdown of 2024/25 was provided and included 83 invoices across 32 suppliers. It was reported that a large percentage of this related to the new Cheadle Campus development with the majority of works completed by 31 July 2025.

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The CFOO advised that an internal procurement audit was underway and had prompted a review of whether future reporting should instead consider cumulative supplier spend.

It was confirmed that the reported level of high value spend largely reflected expected activity, including major capital works and subcontracting arrangements, and that all expenditure reported had been appropriately tendered or was subject to approved exceptions.

RES/12/26 **Annual Insurance Claims over £50,000** *(previously circulated)*

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) reported on, and consideration was given to all current insurance claims including potential impact.

It was confirmed that there were 14 claims in the period and that 6 had been closed and that 8 remained open. Of the 8 open, 2 related to 2023, 1 to 2024, 3 to 2025 and 2 to 2026.

A member enquired whether appropriate insurance cover was in place for reported claims. The CFOO confirmed that the Group holds suitable insurance cover, including for employment tribunal matters, and that insurers were notified promptly to provide support and manage associated legal costs.

It was reported that one claim had resulted in legal costs which had been met by insurers and that the claims reported during the period had not been considered significant.

RES/13/26 **Higher Education Fees FY27/28** *(previously circulated)*

The Committee considered the proposed Higher Education fees for the 2027/2028 academic year.

It was reported that fees had been increased for FY26/27 but that no further increase were proposed for 2027/2028. It was confirmed that the current market position and recruitment context had been taken into account. The Committee noted comparative pricing within the local market and the ongoing challenges around HE recruitment.

A member raised a question in relation to the potential impact of a local competitor charging lower HE fees, it was advised that whilst market comparisons were recognised, reducing fees was not expected to generate sufficient additional recruitment to offset the associated loss of income. It was reported that HE recruitment challenges reflected wider market conditions rather than price alone, and that maintaining current fee levels was considered the lower-risk option in the context of constrained demand.

RESOLVED: Resources Committee recommended the Higher Education Fees FY27/28 to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

RES/14/26 **Mid-Year Update on Year 1 of the DDaT Strategy** *(previously circulated)*

The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) reported on the progress against Year 1 of the Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) Strategy six key objectives and Horizon Plan.

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It was confirmed that a number of targets had been set in 2025 to ensure that the foundations of the DDaT were underway and that these had been reviewed and realigned following Board approval of the Strategy in December 2025. It was confirmed that the final DDaT Strategy 2026/2030 had been provided as supporting documentation.

The CTO reported that delivery during Year 1 had focused on stabilisation, maturity and planning, with progress made against the majority of Horizon 1 objectives. Key areas of activity included improvements to core digital infrastructure and assets, progress on cyber security and business continuity arrangements, implementation of programme management capability, and the development of localised automation bots and AI to improve operational efficiency. It was noted that engagement with staff and students had informed the identification of priority projects, and that whilst not all Year 1 targets would be fully delivered, strong progress had been made within available resources.

The CTO described the completion of the first test for business continuity, specifically addressing what would happen if the Group's Pro Suite system were infected, lost, or suffered a cyber event. It was confirmed that planning was now complete and the team had a full understanding of how quickly data and systems could be restored to maintain continuity.

A member questioned the utilisation of immersive technology, particularly the use of CAVE environments, noting that these appeared under-utilised and asking whether the reported target level of use was sufficient. The CTO confirmed that utilisation was achievable and appropriate for Year 1 and that a key constraint had been the capacity to develop suitable immersive content. It was advised that a dedicated resource had now been put in place to create content, and that usage was expected to increase as a result. The CTO highlighted the positive impact of immersive learning on student engagement and confirmed that utilisation levels were expected to improve as the capability matured.

A member enquired whether external best practice had been reviewed in relation to the use of immersive technology, including learning from other organisations, to support the longer term vision and maximise impact. The CTO confirmed that progress had already been made through a dedicated resource to support content development and improve utilisation. The CTO advised that work was underway to strengthen processes, including improved booking and engagement with external partners, and that the focus for Year 1 had been on building the capability and foundations necessary to support more ambitious use in future years.

The CEO commented that there was a Greater Manchester Colleges community of practice relating to immersive technology, including CAVE development and implementation, which provides an opportunity for shared learning, although this was still in the early stages. Current operational pressures were noted, including Ofsted readiness, which had impacted capacity within teaching teams to fully explore immersive technologies.

RES/15/26 **Mid-Year Update on Year 1 of the Estates Strategy** *(previously circulated)*

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) reported progress against year 1 of the Estates Strategy with a detailed breakdown per campus.

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The CFOO reported on the continued investment to support capacity, condition and the student experience across the Group. Progress was highlighted on major capital projects, alongside ongoing estates maintenance focused on boilers, roofs and lighting, with associated sustainability benefits. Planned works to improve capacity and student support facilities were highlighted, together with continued refurbishment activity to ensure balanced investment across all campuses.

RES/16/25 **Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy/ Fees Policy** *(previously circulated)*

The Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) directed members to the copies of the proposed policies and the tracked changes therein.

Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy
No significant changes were proposed to this policy.

Fees Policy
Proposed updates included:
- Section 4 – most recent DfE Guidance
- Section 5 – addition of information as per GMCA ASF guidance
- Section 6 – Apprenticeship details to reflect most recent guidance
- Sections 13/14 – fee waivers moved to a new section with clearer process of claiming

General updates included links to recent guidance and updated terminology and titles where necessary**.**

A member commented that it was important to ensure that learners received appropriate advice and guidance prior to enrolment, particularly in relation to fees. It was emphasised that where robust information, advice and guidance had been provided, it was reasonable for the Group to maintain a firm position on fees and refunds.

RESOLVED: Resources Committee recommended the Supply Chain and Fee Charging Policy 2026/2027 and the Fees Policy 2026/2027 to the Board of Corporation for approval.

RES/17/26 **Any Other Business**

RESOLVED: There were no matters raised under any other business.

RES/18/26 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED: It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 17 June 2026

The meeting closed at 6.03pm.