

## THE TRAFFORD COLLEGE GROUP

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of the Corporation  
held on Wednesday 13 December 2023 at 5.30pm  
in the Boardroom at the Altrincham Campus**

<b>Present:</b>	Graham Luccock	(Chairperson)
	James Scott	(Principal and Chief Executive Officer)
	Charlotte Barrett	
	Jill Bottomley	
	Olivia Bussey	
	Sarah Drake	
	Janet Grant	
	Jed Hassid	
	Alison Hewitt	
	Heather Lang	
	Michelle McLaughlin	(Staff Member)
	Jonathan O'Brien	
	Blerta Shira	(Student Member)
	Louise Richardson	
*Uswah Sayyed	(Student Member)	
Jeremy Woodside		
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Rebecca Clare	(Corporation Secretary)
	Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava	(Deputy Principal)
	Richard Harris	(Interim Chief Finance Officer)
	*Karen Rae	Armstrong Watson (Financial Statements Auditor)
	Alison Duncalf	(Deputy Corporation Secretary)

\* Attended the meeting via Microsoft Teams

**Minute No.****COR/114/23 Apologies for Absence**

The Deputy Corporation Secretary (DCS) reported that apologies for absence had been received from Fatema Desai, Emily McIntosh, Ayo Oyeboode and Marcia Reynolds.

It was further reported that the Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning was unable to attend the meeting.

**COR/115/23 Declarations of Direct or Indirect Interests in any of the meeting's business items**

Jeremy Woodside (JW) declared an interest in agenda item 5.6 (Sabbatical of Independent Member of the Board of the Corporation). Members noted the declaration and were in agreement that JW remain in the meeting during consideration of the item.

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

**Minute No.****COR/116/23 Minutes of the Board of the Corporation Meeting held on 18 October 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/117/23 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.

The following additional updates were provided:

**i) COR/105/23 – Marple Campus – Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update – 18 October 2023**

A member requested an update in respect to the provision of alternative accommodation in response to the RAAC at the Marple site.

There was confirmation that temporary, albeit high quality, facilities were now in place and expected to be available from the start of the new term. It was further added that the Department for Education (DfE) issue, in relation to capital investment of circa £18k for the provision of CCTV, had been resolved.

A member further asked as to whether there had been an impact upon the ability to offer practical science. The PCEO responded that the sequencing of the curriculum had been reviewed and that two rooms previously cordoned off, the science laboratories, had now been brought back into use.

**ii) COR/101/23 – Annual Safeguarding Report and confirmation that all governors had read Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023 – 18 October 2023**

**There was confirmation that all governors had now confirmed they had read KCSIE September 2023. There was agreement that this action be closed.**

**Action: Deputy Corporation Secretary**

**iii) COR/08/23 – Key Performance Indicators Update Report and Staff General Sickness versus Mental Health Sickness – 29 March 2023**

There was confirmation that this item continued to be open pending the provision of a further data in respect of sickness and mental health. The Principal and CEO (PCEO) stated that whilst oversight of this action had not been lost, in general sickness was in the main short term and there was not considered to be a mental health crisis at the college.

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

**Minute No.****COR/118/23 Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022-2023**

The Chairperson of the Audit Committee referred members to the previously circulated Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022-2023 and provided an overview of the key aspects of the report.

There was confirmation that the report had been considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2023. The Chairperson of the Committee further confirmed that the Committee was satisfied the report presented an accurate record of the work undertaken by Audit Committee during the 2022-2023 academic year.

The Chairperson of the Committee referred members to the Report and the overview of the internal audit and advisory reports as conducted during the course of the academic year. Reference was also made to the oversight of risk management and board assurance.

The Chairperson commended the Annual Report to the Board of the Corporation stating that *“based upon the matters reported and considered by the Committee, to the best of its ability, the Committee had concluded that the adequacy and effectiveness of the Board of the Corporation’s audit arrangements, assurance over subcontracting, framework of governance, risk management and control processes and its process for the efficient and effective use of resources, solvency and safeguarding of assets, could be relied upon by the Board of the Corporation.”*

The Committee was also of the view that *“the Governing Body responsibilities, as detailed in the Annual Financial Statements, had been satisfactorily discharged.”*

There was confirmation that the Chairperson of the Audit Committee had signed the report accordingly.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022-2023 be accepted and approved.**

**COR/119/23 Self-Assessment of Compliance with Regularity and Propriety Requirements 2022-2023**

Members were referred to the previously circulated completed Self-Assessment of Compliance with Regularity and Propriety Requirements (SACRPR) 2022-2023 in relation to The Trafford College Group (TTCG).

The Interim Chief Finance Officer (ICFO) stated that it was a requirement of the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice that the completed Self-Assessment Questionnaire be signed by the Chairperson and Accounting Officer (PCEO).

There was confirmation that the questionnaire summarised key considerations in respect of the statement on regularity and compliance. Reference was further made to the new areas of the self-assessment relating to the ONS reclassification of FE Colleges and the requirements of Managing Public Money framework for the public sector.

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There was confirmation that the SACRPR had been presented to and considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2023 and that it was recommended to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration and deliberation it was unanimously resolved that the Self-Assessment of Compliance with Regularity and Propriety Requirements for 2022-2023 be approved and the Chairperson and Principal and CEO be duly authorised to sign the documents accordingly.**

**Action: Chairperson and Principal and CEO**

**COR/120/23**

**Presentation from the Financial Statements and Regularity Auditor in respect of the Annual Report and Financial Statements, for the period ending 31 July 2023**

The Chairperson invited the Armstrong Watson representative (AW) to make a presentation in relation to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ending 31 July 2023.

The AW representative confirmed that this was the second year of working with the Group and added that this year there had been a complete change in both the staff at the Group as well as a different audit team.

With reference to the Financial Management and Governors' Report the AW representative highlighted the following in relation to section 2 of the report, significant audit risks and income recognition:

- there was confirmation that this was one of the biggest areas of the audit within which the focus was upon ensuring eligibility of students and the provision of learning to those students i.e. the Group was entitled to the income stream
- there was confirmation that there was satisfaction with the completeness of income and that there would be no clawback
- confirmation that the R14 return had now been received and that there was no material difference arising
- for management override no issues had been noted
- recognition that in relation to the defined benefit pension scheme that whilst there had been huge swings over the years the Group was not in receipt of any financial benefit from the surpluses
- there was confirmation that the position in relation to the pension scheme had been discussed in depth with local management
- in relation to key focus areas, careful consideration had been given to regularity, particularly in the context of the ONS reclassification, from which no issues had been noted.

The following aspects were further highlighted:

- Section 3 (Summary of Adjustments) there had been only one unadjusted figure which had potential to affect the outcome in relation to an estimate on unaccrued holiday pay which was considered to be below materiality and not a cause for concern

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- Section 4 (Audit Findings) within which all matters had been discussed and accepted by local management and with implementation having taken place
- Section 5 (Internal Controls) and despite changes in the management team there were few recommendations arising all of which have been discussed and accepted by management and which in due course would be progressed as part of the audit tracker reporting to the Audit Committee.

The AW representative recorded her thanks to everyone involved in the audit.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and the presentation from the Financial Statements and Regularity Auditor in respect of the Annual Report and Financial Statements, for the period ending 31 July 2023, was received and noted.**

**COR/121/23 Final Governance and Management Report for the period ending 31 July 2023**

The Chairperson invited the representative from Armstrong Watson (AW), the Group's Financial Statements and Regularity Auditor, to present the item.

The AW representative provided the Board of the Corporation with an overview of the Governance and Management Report and confirmed that the audit had progressed well; the auditors had been able to obtain all initial information; and that they were well supported throughout the process and there had been good communication with the Group

The following key issues were highlighted:

- the identification of 5 significant audit risks or key audit focus areas at the planning stage encompassing income recognition including income entitlement, management override, defined benefit pension scheme, debtors overstatement and going concern, arising from which no issues were noted
- the key audit focus areas encompassing regularity and potential for clawback
- a summary of adjustments
- audit findings and matters to the attention of the Board of the Corporation
- internal audit controls (1 amber and 2 green)
- audit conclusions.

There was confirmation that no significant difficulties had been encountered during the audit and that with respect to written representation specific representations were only to be sought in relation to confirmation that the Department for Education had committed to covering all operational costs associated with RAAC.

In respect of audit conclusions and opinion, AW concluded, that it was anticipated that they would be in a position to issue an unmodified audit report in respect of the Financial Statements of The Trafford College Group subject to the Board of the Corporation approving the Accounts as presented.

In addition, it was stated that AW would also issue an unmodified assurance report on regularity to The Trafford College Group, subject to the Board of the Corporation approving the Accounts as presented.

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Questions and comments were invited from members.

Members thanked the AW representative for her attendance and presentation. The Chairperson further recorded the thanks of the Board of the Corporation to the Finance Team.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration and deliberation it was unanimously resolved that the Final Governance and Management Report for The Trafford College Group, including the letter of representation, for the period ending 31 July 2023 be accepted and approved.**

**COR/122/23 Annual Report and Financial Statements, including Letters of Representation, for the period ending 31 July 2023**

Members were referred to the previously circulated report from the ICFO and information to support the Board's consideration of the Annual Report and Financial Statements, including the letter of representation for the period ending 31 July 2023, as provided in the supporting documentation.

The attention of members was further directed to the following appended documents:

- i) Appendix 1 – Reconciliation to the Management Accounts as at 31 July 2023
- ii) Appendix 2 - Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ended 31 July 2023
- iii) Appendix 3 - Letter of Representation
- iv) Appendix 4 - Letter of Representation Regularity

There was confirmation that the Audit Committee, at its meeting on 20 November 2023, had given detailed consideration, to the Report and Financial Statements as well as the letter of representation and other supporting documents, and had duly recommended them to the Board of the Corporation for approval.

The ICFO took members through the report and appendices and further confirmed the submission arrangements of the documentation to the ESFA.

Members were further directed to the reconciliation to the Management Accounts for the year ended 31 July 2023. It was noted that in presenting the financial information shown in the Financial Statements, a material accounting judgement had been taken around the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) calculation. There was confirmation of no expectation of economic benefit to the Group which had been accepted by the external auditors.

In relation to the Annual Report and Financial Statements the following was highlighted:

- the 2 parts to the report, the first section comprising a Strategic Report and the Report of the Board of the Corporation along with supporting statements, and the latter element being the notes to the financial statements

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- attention was drawn to the inclusion of energy and carbon reporting, the principal risks and uncertainties, key performance indicators and the positive statement of going concern
- governance information and statements on internal control
- the statement of opinion of the internal auditors
- in the second part of the report statements in respect of income and expenditure including statements in relation to comprehensive income, changes to reserves, the financial position, year end cash balances and cash flows.

There was confirmation that subject to the approval of the Annual Report and Financial Statements the Chairperson and PCEO would be asked to sign the documentation accordingly.

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

- (a) the Final Governance and Management Report for The Trafford College Group, including the letter of representation, for the period ending 31 July 2023 be approved;**
- (b) the Annual Report and Financial Statements including the Letter of Representations for the period ending 31 July 2023 be approved;**
- (c) the authorised signatories (Chairperson and Principal and CEO) be duly authorised to sign the documents accordingly;**
- (d) that the Chief Executive be authorised to convert the Financial Statements into the "Finance Record" to be uploaded to the ESFA before 31 December 2023, with sign off by the Accounting Officer; and**
- (e) the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ending 31 July 2023 be published on the Group's website in advance of 31 January 2024.**

**Action: Chairperson/Principal and CEO/Interim Chief Finance Officer**

**COR/123/23**

**Chief Finance Officer's Report and Management Accounts for the 3 months ending 31 October 2023**

The Interim Chief Finance Officer (ICFO) referred members to the previously circulated Management Accounts for the 3 months ending 31 October 2023.

The ICFO advised that the Management Accounts for the 3 months ending 30 September 2023 had been considered in detail by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 15 November 2023.

A brief overview of the key issues from the accounts was provided within which the following was highlighted:

- that the forecast EBITDA was down against budget, presenting a financial health score borderline of `Good`
- income was strong in most areas with some risks carried over from the previous year in relation to Apprenticeships
- 16-19 recruitment had been ahead of allocation, however there would not be in-year benefit due to the lagged funding methodology with benefit being derived in 2024-2025 of circa £1m

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- the pay award had been fully costed; however agency costs required close management
- over spends on non-pay requires action to mitigate the risk of falling into a financial health categorisation of `Requires Improvement`
- the in-year challenge would continue to be as close as possible to the Group's budget target for the year.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member raised the issue of the variances to exam costs of £242k and asked for further information.

The ICFO responded that exam fees were largely activity driven and that the variance was indicative of both the increased number of students as well as the number of Maths and English examination resits taking place. The PCEO commented that benefit would be derived the following year in terms of additional funding and the DP further added that exam bodies had also increased their fees.

- A member suggested that it would be helpful to have sight of a table summarising the areas of over spend.

The ICFO confirmed that areas of non-pay controls were being progressed with a key focus being areas of overspend or where there was a large annual budget.

- The member, with reference to the information around the Forecast EBITDA (point 19), further suggested that a summary of the financial health grade gap and the remedial actions being taken would also be beneficial with maybe a summary around the main risks.

The ICFO undertook to ensure appropriate visibility of this information in future reports.

**Action: Interim Chief Finance Officer**

- A member asked, in relation to financial health, how the Group compared with the wider sector.

The ICFO responded that 2023-2024 would be a tough year for the Group adding that based on the previous year's information the majority of colleges were classified as `Good`. It was noted that there was an expectation that more colleges would fall into `Requires Improvement` during the current academic year. The ICFO stated that this position was indicative of the history of under funding and the growing pressures within the sector.

The PCEO stated that in terms of reassurance the Group had started in a similar position the previous year. It was added that for the current academic year the Group was in better position in terms of income and that there also continued to be an income assumption of £1m held as a risk reserve.



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**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration and deliberation it was resolved that: -**

- (a) the Interim Chief Finance Officer's Report be received and noted; and**
- (b) the Management Accounts for the period to 31 October 2023 be duly approved.**

**COR/124/23****Board Assurance and Risk Management Update – December 2023**

The ICFO referred members to the previously circulated report and the Board Assurance and Risk Management Framework (BARMF) update. There was confirmation of the Board's role in monitoring the BARMF throughout the year in order to satisfy itself that risks were being actively managed, with the appropriate controls in place and that they were working effectively.

In relation to horizon scanning and emerging risks the following were highlighted:

- that there were 23 risks in total, of which the 16 had a gross score below 15, 7 of which had been mitigated within the risk appetite set by the members
- of the 9 remaining risks, 2 had been mitigated to a net risk score lower than 15, leaving 7 risks given priority discussion as per the report
- of the emerging themes arising from horizon scanning, to be brought to attention of members, the first related to English and Maths examination re-sits and the second in relation to other income streams and the maximising of investment opportunities made available to the Group
- in terms of risks overall, 2 movements were highlighted, SP2/3 and a reduction in the risk score following successful recruitment to senior posts and SE3/1 and a decreased risk of a reduction to income following strong recruitment particularly 16-19 students.

There was confirmation that the BARMF had been thoroughly reviewed and challenged by the Audit Committee arising from which the risks had been refined. Members were asked to note the updated risks and mitigating action as presented.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- In relation to the emerging theme around English and Maths examination re-sits a member asked as to the policy of the Group for re-sits and whether there was any cost to the student.

The DP responded that there was a wish to see all students succeeding and work was ongoing to ensure that students were fully prepared for their examinations, both in terms of experience and in minimising barriers. It was noted that the exam boards had reduced the number of times that students could re-sit examinations in a year and further that there were no additional charges made to students re-sitting exams.

The PCEO added that the Government required colleges to fund maths and English examinations, including re-sits, for all students up to the age of 18 years.

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- **A member sought clarity in respect of the addition of AI as a risk, highlighted by the external auditors, to the Risk Management Framework.**

**The ICFO responded that this was being progressed accordingly.**

**Action: Interim Chief Finance Officer**

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration and deliberation it was resolved that:**

- (a) following a review and consideration of the Board Assurance and Risk Management update there was satisfaction that risks were being actively managed, with the appropriate controls in place and that they were working effectively; and**
- (b) that the updated risks and mitigating actions as presented in the supporting paper, with reference to the Full Framework, Summary Framework and visual heat map be approved.**

**COR/125/23****ESFA Financial Forecasting Return 2023-2025 including Financial Dashboard Summary**

The ICFO referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the ongoing management of the Group's financial health which had previously been considered by the Resources Committee at its meeting held on 15 November 2023.

There was confirmation that the appended overview summarised the ESFA's view of the Group in terms of its financial health for the current and following academic year. It was noted that the 3 key criteria related to solvency, profitability and borrowings/affordability of any debt.

The ICFO reported that the financial health score for 2022-2023 had been classified by the ESFA as 'Good' and further that, based on the budgetary information for 2023-2024, as also being Good.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the ESFA Financial Forecasting Return 2023-2025 including Financial Dashboard Summary be received and noted.**

**COR/126/23****Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 20 November 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 as follows:

- the detailed consideration of the items detailed earlier in the meeting
- moving forward the addition of AI to the Risk Register
- consideration of the Value for Money (VFM) Annual Report which covered a range of issues including social value
- the year-on-year improvement in the quality of the VFM Annual Report was referenced
- the additional internal audit work, commissioned at the request of the Office for Students (OfS), in relation to data errors in 2021-2022 with the report

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arising scheduled to be available by the end of January 2024.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member highlighted the request made by the Committee in relation to the redrafting of the Data Protection Annual Report 2022-2023 (AUD/35/23).

The Chairperson of the Committee referred to the recent outsourcing of the service and the request made by the Committee for the report to be revisited. There was confirmation that following the meeting a refocused report had been presented and duly considered by members of the Committee accordingly.

- Clarity was sought by a member around the VFM Report (AUD/45/23) and the breakdown of teaching and non-teaching staffing costs.

There was confirmation that learning facilitators currently sat within business support as opposed to be under the teaching classification. The PCEO added that from an accounting and VFM reporting perspective, this data enabled benchmarking against other colleges and it was important to be able to determine where learning facilitators sat in terms of teaching and support staff.

- The member further sought clarity as to whether the classification of learning facilitators within the breakdown of pay costs would impact upon the Group's KPIs.

The ICFO responded that from an ESFA perspective the KPI related to pay costs as a whole.

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

**COR/127/23****Matters Arising from the Minutes****i) AUD/36/23 – Data Protection Annual Report 2023**

**There were no questions or issues raised members and following due consideration, on the recommendation of the Committee, the Data Protection Annual Report 2023 was approved.**

**ii) AUD/35/23 – Internal Audit Report – Business Critical Controls and Follow Up Report**

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration, on the recommendation of the Committee, the Internal Audit Business Critical Controls and Follow Up Report was approved.**

**iii) AUD/35/23 – Internal Audit Report – Human Resources Absence Report**

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**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration, on the recommendation of the Committee, the Internal Audit Report Human Resources Absence Report was approved.**

**COR/128/23****Minutes of the Resources Committee Meetings held on 11 October 2023 and 15 November 2023**

The minutes of the meetings were received and the Chairperson of the Committee provided a brief overview of the business items considered by the Committee as follows:

- the extensive reporting that had already taken place earlier in the meeting
- the subcontracting update and the additional internal audit work commissioned with a view to attaining an additional layer of assurance in respect of the interpretation of subcontracted and partnership arrangements
- the learner numbers and funding update which presented a positive start to the new academic year
- consideration of the Digital Annual Plan and outcomes for 2022-2023
- an update on the Group's Accommodation Strategy.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- The PCEO commented that the additional work commissioned in relation to the interpretation of subcontracted and partnership arrangements whilst providing another layer of assurance would not preclude any future queries on the part of the ESFA.
- Members recorded their thanks to the Resources and Audit Committees for their work in relation to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period ending 31 July 2023.

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

**COR/129/23****Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes in addition to those considered earlier in the meeting.

**COR/130/23****Higher Education Self-Evaluation Documentation 2022-2023 and Quality Improvement Plan 2023-2024**

The PCEO referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the self-evaluation of Higher Education (HE) provision for the academic year 2022-2023 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023-2024.

It was stated that the HE Self Evaluation Document (SED) was equivalent to the FE Self Evaluation Document (SAR) and had been considered in detail by the Committee.

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It was commented that the HE SED and QIP were much sharper and more focused documents. Reference was made to the strengths identified, based on evidence from student data, external examiners reports, CDAR feedback, the National Student Surveys and other feedback mechanisms, and the 8 areas for improvement (Afls) arising, each with a clear objective and detailed actions to support their completion. It was noted that retention and some inconsistencies in programme delivery continued to be a focus.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A question was asked by a member in relation to Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) and the plans of the Group going forward.

The Deputy Principal (DP) responded that a significant amount of development work had taken place and that the Group was seeking to align the qualifications to existing provision and pathways for learners. It was added that numbers were very small at the moment but that a lot of work was taking place with employers to improve their understanding of HTQs. It was further commented that uptake in general had been low across the sector.

The PCEO added that HTQs were a kitemark qualification and differed from T Levels (a Level 3 qualification), a new qualification. Clarity was provided that HTQs were new or existing level 4 or 5 qualifications approved and aligned to employer-led occupational standards. It was stated that HTQs provided an opportunity for full-time study and addressed the issue of securing internal progression as an alternative to attending university.

The DP reiterated that there was a need to work with both students and employers to understand the landscape. It was added that the Group was also looking to modularise the qualification and offer greater flexibility and the ability to pick and choose areas that a student may wish to study.

**The PCEO suggested that it would be beneficial to provide members with a succinct summary of HTQs and T Levels.**

**Action: Deputy Principal**

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that the Higher Education Self Evaluation Report 2022-2023 and Quality Improvement Plan 2023-2024 be approved and implemented.**

**COR/131/23**

**Further Education Self-Assessment Report 2022-2023, Quality Improvement Plan 2023-2024 and Key Performance Indicators 2023-2024**

The Deputy Principal (DP) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the Further Education Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2022-23, Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2023-2024 and Key Performance Indicators 2023-2024.

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There was confirmation that the documents had been considered at length by the FE Curriculum and Quality Committee and had further been validated by the Governor Validation Panel held on 8 November 2023.

The DP provided an outline of the 8 key objectives/areas for improvement (Afl) and highlighted the following:

- the overall assessment of `Good `for the SAR 2022-2023 with a `Requires Improvement` grading for Apprenticeships
- recognition that whilst Apprenticeships had made improvements the area was not yet considered to be consistent enough on the ground
- the challenge to attain `Outstanding` for Adult Learning Programmes and Personal Development, both areas that it was considered the Group excelled in.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- The PCEO provided additional context in respect of Apprenticeships stating that they were becoming much harder to deliver and further that external judgement was via an Apprenticeship Accountability Framework.

Members noted that Apprenticeships accounted for circa 5% of the income of the Group and presented a complex and challenging area.

Members recorded their thanks to the DP and colleagues for their hard work.

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration and deliberation it was unanimously resolved that the Further Education Self-Assessment Report 2022-2023 and Quality Improvement Plan 2023-2024 be approved and implemented.**

**Action: Deputy Principal**

**COR/132/23****Operational Plan and Key Performance Indicators Update Report – Term 1 2023-2024 Update**

The PCEO referred members to the previously circulated report and a Term 1 update of progress against the Operational Plan (OP) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) during 2023-2024.

Members were referred to the Executive Summary and RAG rated supporting information in relation to the Term 1 position against the Group's KPIs and the Term 1 position and progress against the OP.

In respect of the OP the following main areas of concern were noted: -

- the addressing of low student attendance and a focus on student behaviours and attitudes
- continuing the approach to improving the quality of education across Apprenticeships
- continuing to drive the Group's objectives around meeting local, regional and national skills needs
- maximising income across all funding areas

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- addressing non-pay overspends to bring them back in line with budget
- to continue the Group's approach to face-to-face Campus briefings
- to continue to work with stakeholders over the planning risks to the Cheadle project
- to maximise the use of various funding opportunities
- to develop a Group approach to Enabling Team self-assessment and quality improvement planning.

In relation to the KPIs it was stated that main risk related to the EBITDA which was being addressed via two actions, maximising income across all income streams with a view to negating a need to use the risk reserve in mitigation, and by keeping pay and non-pay under control including addressing the current non-pay overspend with a view to bringing it back in line with budget.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Operational Plan and Key Performance indicators Report Term 1 2023-2024 be received and noted.**

**COR/133/23****Minutes of the Further Education Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 8 November 2023**

The Chairperson of the Committee presented a brief overview of the business items considered by the Committee at its meeting and the following was highlighted:

- the items in relation to the FE SAR 2022-2023 and QIP 2023-2024 as considered earlier in the meeting
- English and Maths outcomes at both a Group level and nationally
- confirmation that in excess of 1,000 students were sitting examinations, highlighting the organisation and the number of staff involved
- the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2023-2024 and the particular in-year focus of the Committee in relation to student progress, Construction, Health and Social Care, Early Years, Computing and Science, plus English and maths
- the comprehensive reporting from the Student Governors and the Student Experience and Support reports, all of which were commended to members.

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

**COR/134/23****Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising that had not been covered elsewhere in the meeting.

**COR/135/23****Minutes of the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 22 November 2023**

In the absence of the Chairperson of the Higher Education (HE) Curriculum and Quality Committee, members noted that a meeting of the Committee had taken place on 22 November 2023.

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**There was agreement that further reporting would be deferred until the next meeting of the Board of the Corporation.**

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

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

**COR/136/23****Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising that had not been covered elsewhere in the meeting.

**COR/137/23****Key Issues of the Equality and Diversity Committee Meeting held on 29 September 2023**

In the absence of the Link Governor the DP referred members to the previously circulated actions from the meeting of the Equality and Diversity Committee held on 29 September 2023.

The following areas considered by the Committee were highlighted:

- the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for 2023-2024
- the opportunities and mechanisms to encourage both students and staff to share their information
- agreement of an approach and template around Equality Impact Assessment
- the revised Flexible Working Procedure
- agreement of the Group's Awareness and Celebration Calendar.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- With reference to flexible working arrangements a member raised the recent announcement in relation to the ability of staff to request flexible working hours from day one.

The DP confirmed that staff had been made aware of the changes to the legislation and consideration had been given to the Group's response to flexible working requests. There was recognition that for teaching positions there may be less flexibility in terms of such requests.

The PCEO stated that the biggest development related to the high demand to work from home and the limitations of performing teaching and leadership roles remotely. It was added that where roles could be performed remotely, one-off arrangements could be agreed by line managers but that if work was to routinely be undertaken remotely this should be formalised and reviewed on a regular basis.

- The member further asked whether there were any examples of teaching from home/remotely.

The DP responded that she understood this took place in the University sector but was less common in the FE sector.



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It was also commented that some colleges had adopted an approach of 4 days of working in college, via a condensed timetable, and with one day, usually Fridays, working remotely.

The view was expressed that this was largely unique to smaller colleges and driven by efficiencies.

The PCEO added that post Covid this aspect had been explored and for some teaching staff there could be opportunities for finishing their teaching hours at the end of the day via working at home. It was stated however that there was a need to remember that as an educational establishment, students were on site, and there was the requirement to provide appropriate support. There was recognition of the need to consider flexibility and provide support to staff however it was suggested that there was a need to maintain departmental cover to deal with both student and employer queries.

- **A member highlighted the Awareness and Celebration Calendar and suggested that it may be useful for members to have a copy.**

**Action: Deputy Principal**

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the key issues and matters arising from the Equality and Diversity Committee meeting held on 29 September 2023 be received and noted.**

**COR/138/23****Key Issues of the Health and Safety Committee Meeting held on 20 September 2023**

In the absence of the Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning (VPCSP) it was confirmed that the Health and Safety Committee meeting, held on 20 September 2023, had been an additional meeting and had as its focus a management review. It was confirmed that this was a recommendation, following the Group's successful ISO re-accreditation, and comprised a summary of the previous year's activities and what was planned moving forward.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and the position in relation to the extra meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 20 September 2023 was noted.**

**COR/139/23****Key Issues of the Safeguarding Committee Meeting held on 10 October 2023**

The DP with reference to the actions from the meeting of the Safeguarding Committee held on 10 October 2023 highlighted the following:

- consideration of the work programme of the Committee for the 2023-2024 academic year
- a review of the terms of reference of the Committee
- a review of the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Action Plan which included an update to safety on line and a useful conversation in respect of the Israel-Hamas conflict
- consideration of the Annual Safeguarding Annual Report

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- the introduction of a new system for students who forgot their identification badges.

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the key issues from the Safeguarding Committee held on 10 October 2023 be received and noted.**

**COR/140/23****Actions of the Skills and Accountability Committee held on 27 November 2023 and any Matter Arising**

The PCEO referred members to the previously circulated summary of the actions from the inaugural meeting of the Skills Accountability Committee meeting held on 27 November 2023.

The PCEO drew attention to the update of the Accountability Statement (AS) Objectives 2023-2024 and a Term 1 update. Reference was further made to a proposal to add an additional objective to the AS around the identification of appropriate funding to supplement the implementation of objectives and the agreement from the Committee that approval for this amendment be sought from the Board of the Corporation.

Attention was further drawn to the new guidance for the “Duty to Review how the provision meets local needs” which was scheduled to be released by the Department for Education. Members noted that the guidance had been issued earlier in the day and it was proposed that the duty to review be tied into the AS.

In relation to other developments the PCEO reported that the Greater Manchester (GM) Colleges had been successful in securing £8m from the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) to support, over the next two years, the implementation of Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities. There was confirmation that the Group had secured £1.3m of the funding, with the vast proportion to be capital.

Members noted that the Group would be utilising the majority of the funding to implement new immersive technology suites (known as CAVEs) to support the delivery of priority areas at Altrincham, Cheadle and Stockport. It was added that Stretford would also be benefiting from investment in physical resources to support electric vehicle and domestic retrofit curriculum developments.

A further update was provided in relation to the Further Education Innovation Fund (FEIF) to which the GM Colleges had been successful in securing additional monies to support LSIP developments, in particular the link between colleges and employers in supporting innovation and productivity within the workplace, using the skills and resource of existing apprentices. There was confirmation that the Group would benefit from circa £350k of funding up to March 2025. Members noted that the monies would focus on two projects, digital marketing support at Stockport and a project at Trafford and a project in relation to productivity for advanced manufacturing.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

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- Members raised the exciting prospect of the CAVEs and highlighted the opportunities that may arise in relation to commercial revenue and work with employers.

The DP confirmed that the lead time prior to delivery and installation was in the region of 10 weeks. **The DP further undertook to share with members` Igloo` information.**

**Action: Deputy Principal**

It was further added that the Group would also be training other colleges in respect of the CAVEs. Members further highlighted the opportunities to work with other bodies including schools, employers and the Chamber of Commerce.

- **A member suggested that the notes of the meeting would benefit from the inclusion of its membership.**

**Action: Principal and CEO**

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that:-**

- (a) the amendment to the Accountability Statement and inclusion of an additional objective, around the identification and use of additional funding to support the objectives, be approved; and**
- (b) the actions of the Skills and Accountability Committee held on 27 November 2023 and any matter arising be received and noted.**

**COR/141/23****Governor Links and Learning Walks Update**

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

- Marketing and External Relations
- Education Programmes – Academic
- FE Student Engagement
- Information Technology - Curriculum
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
- Progression Curriculum and SEND (including High Needs)
- Quality of Education

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member referenced the carbon position of the Group, as detailed within the Financial Statements, adding that as part of their Link Governor role, this aspect had been explored further with the Director of Marketing and External Relations particularly from a marketing perspective.
- A comment was made by a member in relation to environmental social governance and suggested that this information could also be repackaged and utilised externally.

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**It was suggested that this aspect be addressed as part of the Strategic Development Day scheduled to take place on 6 March 2023.**

**Action: Principal and CEO**

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

**COR/142/23****Governance Self-Assessment Report 2022-2023 and Quality Improvement Plan 2023-2024 including Draft External Governance Review Action Plan**

The Corporation Secretary (CS) referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the validated Governance Self-Assessment (SAR) 2022-2023 and the Draft Governance Action Plan 2023-2024 which combined the Governance Quality Improvement Action Plan 2023-2024 and External Governance Review Actions into a single document.

It was reported that the Governance SAR 2022-2023, as previously considered by the Board of the Corporation, had been presented to the Validation Panel arising from which an award of `Good` had been made.

With respect to the proposed Governance Review Action Plan 2023-2024 it was confirmed that the Plan included actions from the final External Governance Report as well as the actions from the Board's working group. It was confirmed that the actions arising and as presented within the Plan be routinely reviewed in-year.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- **A member referenced 11.3 and mentoring support and suggested that it would be helpful to have some guidance and a brief outline of the expectations of the mentor.**

Members supported the proposal and the CS undertook to progress accordingly.

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

- **Attention was drawn to point 4 in the Action Plan in relation to the effective induction and the target date for completion of the induction of the recently appointed Senior Postholders. The target date in relation to the Strategic Plan 2024-2027 was also highlighted.**

The CS undertook to revisit the target dates.

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

The Chairperson made reference to the short survey issued by the CS prior to the start of the meeting. **Members were encouraged to return their completed surveys which addressed a number of aspects including the timing of meetings and future interest in membership of committees.**

**Minute No.****Action: Members of the Board of the Corporation**

Discussion took place around newly appointed governors and the provision of intensive support (11.3). It was suggested that it may also be appropriate to agree personal objectives during the first year following appointment, to support their contribution, which could then be revisited as part of the annual review process.

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

The CS confirmed that termly updates of progress against the actions would be made to the Board of the Corporation.

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that Governance Self-Assessment Report 2022-2023 and Quality Improvement Plan 2023-2024 including the External Governance Review Action Plan, incorporating the above comments, be approved.**

**COR/143/23****Adoption of the AoC Code of Good Governance**

The CS referred members to the previously circulated report and information in relation to the new AoC Code of Good Governance as introduced in September 2023. Reference was further made to the two supporting documents, the AoC Code of Good Governance Template which incorporated an overview of the status of the compliance of the Board of the Corporation as well as copy of the AoC Further Education Code of Governance.

The CS indicated that a coherent and collaborative approach had been adopted. In relation to the status of the Board of the Corporation's compliance it was stated that performance was largely compliant with the only issue relating to how the Board monitors the performance of Senior Postholders and the publication of a Remuneration Statement on the Group's website. **The CS confirmed that a report and new format for the presentation of this information would be considered for approval at the next meeting of the Remuneration Committee.**

**Action: Corporation Secretary/Remuneration Committee**

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member commented on the lack of reference to the duties of members and it was suggested that as a Board there was a need to be clear as individual duties and how they fed into the Code.

**Members were in agreement that it may be timely to revisit the role description for members of the Board of the Corporation. JH undertook to share some additional supporting information with the CS.**

**Action: JH/Corporation Secretary**

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- A member added that they had previously undertaken and benefitted from some external training on individual responsibilities as a governor.

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the AoC Code of Good Governance be adopted and the status of the Board of the Corporation's compliance be noted.**

**COR/144/23****Standing Orders**

The DCS referred members to the previously circulated report and a review of the Board of the Corporation's Standing Orders arising from which there were no proposed revisions.

It was further stated that it was proposed that the Standing Orders next be reviewed in the summer of 2024 when other key Governance Documentation was scheduled to be reviewed.

**There were no questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Board of the Corporation's Standing Orders be approved and adopted and further that the Standing Orders next be reviewed and updated in the summer of 2024.**

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

**COR/145/23****Committee Membership Arrangements 2023-2024**

The CS referred members to the previously circulated report and an update on the status of the current Committee and Working Group Membership for 2023-2024. There was confirmation that this information would inform recruitment recommendations to the Board of the Corporation moving forward.

The CS presented an overview in relation to: -

- current membership vacancies on both the Board of the Corporation and its supporting committees
- the size of the Board of the Corporation, an action from the External Governance Review
- the planned short survey, as referred to an earlier agenda item, to be undertaken with a view to gathering information in relation to the current committee membership; expressions of interest in the membership of committees; succession planning; and the timings of meetings the outcomes of which would be collated and provided to the Search Committee for consideration
- the three pending current applications for prospective governor roles which would be reviewed and considered further at the January 2024 meeting of the Search Committee.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member commented that the considerations of the Search Committee should perhaps be deferred pending the formulation of the new Strategic

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Plan (SP). It was suggested that the new SP may inform the skills requirements for its delivery.

**Members concurred with the proposal and the CS advised that in the interim, to ensure compliance with terms of reference and quoracy requirements, the Search Committee explore opportunities for in-house appointments to committee vacancies.**

**Action: Corporation Secretary/Search Committee**

Discussion followed with respect to skill requirements and whether there was potential to amalgamate any of the committees. The view was expressed that the committee structure fulfilled the remit of the Board of the Corporation and that it was unlikely any of the committees could be merged. The CS added however that it was intended that the terms of reference of all the committees of the Board of the Corporation would be revisited and reviewed accordingly during the remainder of the academic year.

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the current position in relation to Committee Membership be noted and that the planned member survey arrangements be endorsed.**

**COR/146/23****Sabbatical Request of Independent Member of the Corporation**

The Chairperson reported that he was in receipt of a written request from JW to access sabbatical leave from his position of Independent Member of the Corporation for a six-month period.

It was confirmed that the request was consistent with 6.4 of the Board of the Corporation's Standing Orders and members indicated that they were minded to authorise the request.

It was proposed that JW return date be aligned to the 17 July 2024 meeting of the Board of the Corporation.

**It was further highlighted that JW currently held the position of Vice Chairperson of the Resources Committee and that this position may need to be filled in their absence.**

**Action: Chairperson of the Board of the Corporation/Corporation Secretary**

**There were no questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was unanimously resolved that Jeremy Woodside, Independent Member of the Board of the Corporation, be granted a sixth-month sabbatical, with a view to returning in advance of the 17 July 2024 meeting of the Board of the Corporation.**

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

**Minute No.****COR/147/23 Business Continuity Policy 2023-2024**

In the absence of the Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning (VPCSP) the DCS referred members to the previously circulated report and Business Continuity Policy (BCP) 2023-2024.

There was confirmation that the Group had reviewed and refreshed the BCP and the supporting Incident Response Procedures. It was stated that the Group was committed to ensuring operational resilience, and as part of that commitment, the BCP was aligned with best practices.

It was noted that recommendations from a recent audit had been addressed in the proposed BCP, whilst ensuring that the Group maintains a manageable process that reflected its size, complexities and capacity of the organisation.

It was further confirmed that the Policy had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting to enable comments to be submitted directly to the VPCSP. It was noted that where comments had been submitted the VPCSP had responded accordingly.

It was reported that a comment had been made in advance of the meeting by a member in relation to the Post-Incident Review process and the ability to learn from events as and when they occurred. **Further to this comment, the VPCSP had undertaken to add a sentence to the BCP to reflect that whilst the Business Continuity Team would monitor progress against agreed actions where appropriate any further required actions would be presented to the Health and Safety Committee or Information Governance Group accordingly.**

**Action: Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning**

**There were no further questions or comments from members and following due consideration it was resolved that the Business Continuity Policy 2023-2024, incorporating the above amendment, be approved and implemented.**

**Action: Vice Principal Corporate Services and Planning.**

**COR/148/23 Launch of the new Trafford and Stockport College Group Name**

The PCEO reported that following the Department for Education (DfE) approval of a name change in August 2023 a formal launch and new website would take place in January 2024. It was noted that the Director of Marketing and External Relations had undertaken a significant amount of preparatory work and that an additional piece of work was also taking place around policies and the incorporation of the updated logo.

In terms of stakeholder engagement, including employers, it was confirmed that a letter had been sent from the PCEO from which initial feedback suggested the name change was being positively received.

In terms of a physical launch event the PCEO indicated that following detailed consideration it had been decided against however a marketing event had been planned for Stockport early in the New Year and breakfast meetings with councillors would also be taking place. It was further suggested that once the



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new Strategic Plan was in place a launch event could potentially take place in the summer term incorporating a review of the previous three years as well as aspects such as the Group's commitment to its two local authorities going forward.

Questions and comments were invited from members.

- A member sought clarity as to the actual launch date of the new Group name.

The PCEO confirmed that the new Group name would be adopted from 8 January 2024 and that changes including those to email accounts would follow as part of the process.

**There were no further questions or issues raised by members and following due consideration it was resolved that the position in relation to the launch of the new Trafford and Stockport Group name be received and noted.**

**COR/149/23 Any Other Business**

Members recorded their thanks to the DCS for her support and the provision of continuity following the retirement of the outgoing CS in the latter part of September 2023 and the full-time commencement of the incoming CS in mid-January 2024.

Members further recorded their thanks to the ICFO for his hard work during his tenure at the Group and wished him well for the future.

There were no further matters raised under any other business.

**COR/150/23 Date of the Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board of the Corporation would be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 27 March 2024 in the Boardroom at the Altrincham Campus.

**Action: Corporation Secretary**

The CS further highlighted the following forthcoming events:

- Governor Training on Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 5.30pm
- Strategic Development Day on Wednesday 6 March 2014 from 1pm to 6pm.

**Members were invited to confirm their availability to the CS with regard to their attendance at these events.**

**Action: Members/Corporation Secretary**

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

Karen Armstrong (Armstrong Watson representative) left the meeting at 5.59pm following consideration of agenda item 2.6.

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Blerta Shira (Student Member) joined the meeting at 5.50pm of agenda item 2.4 and left the meeting at 7.30pm following consideration of agenda item 5.2.