Heart of Yorkshire Education Group

Finance, People and Resources Committee (‘Committee’)

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 12 March 2026 at Castleford College

Conference Room (CX315) (‘Meeting’)

Present:

- Stuart Brenton
- Andrew McConnell
- Tracy Tallant
- Neil Warren (Chair)
- Tim Welton

In attendance:

- Caroline Carter (Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources)
- Sam Cremore (Head of Governance and Legal Services (‘**Clerk**’))
- Kris Rossington (Director of Finance)
- Karen Sykes (Group Executive Director of People)

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

   1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the Meeting which he noted was quorate and had been called in accordance with the Instrument and Articles.

   1.2. No apologies for absence were received.

   1.3. Kris Rossington, Director of Finance, was attending his first Committee meeting and introduced himself to members.

2. **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair 2025/26**

   2.1. The Clerk explained that the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for the year would ordinarily have taken place at the previous meeting, but this had not been possible due to quoracy issues. Members were invited to confirm appointments for the remainder of the year.

   2.2. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT Neil Warren be appointed Chair and Tracy Tallant be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee for 2025/26.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair invited declarations of interest. No declarations were made.

4. **Minutes of Meeting held on 17 June 2025**

   4.1. The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025. Members confirmed that the minutes were an accurate record.

   4.2. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 November 2025 be approved.

5. Matters Arising

5.1. The Clerk confirmed that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

5.2. Members were invited to raise any further matters arising but none were identified.

5.3. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources reported that discussions had taken place with the Department for Education regarding the College's financial health grading, resulting in an agreed adjustment which confirmed the Group's financial health status as "Good" rather than "Outstanding" which was the preferred, more accurate position.

6. People Update

6.1. The Group Executive Director of People presented the People Update, noting that:

6.1.1. Recruitment and retention challenges persisted but that turnover was better than the agreed target.

6.1.2. The recent "Pulse" survey had shown strong staff satisfaction.

6.1.3. PDRs were underway with actions to ensure full completion.

6.1.4. CPD engagement was strong.

6.2. She outlined work underway to move away from overly simplistic performance measures and towards a broader set of engagement indicators, including sense of belonging.

6.3. She explained that improvements were being made to recording PDR completion to distinguish between conversations taking place and administrative forms being completed, noting that system changes were being implemented to improve accuracy and assurance.

6.4. She also described ongoing work to analyse reasons for leaving and to ensure actions were targeted rather than purely descriptive.

6.5. Questions and answers:

6.5.1. Q: What does the engagement index score tell us, and how should it be interpreted?

A: The Group Executive Director of People explained that the score was out of 10 but the organisation was moving away from single headline scores and towards a broader set of questions to capture engagement and belonging more meaningfully.

6.5.2. Q: What assurance does the Committee have that PDRs are actually happening?

A: The Group Executive Director of People stated that conversations were taking place but that historic reliance on form completion had undermined assurance. A system change was being introduced so managers could record when discussions occurred, separating this from form submission.

6.5.3. Q: Are turnover figures being analysed in enough depth?

A: Members noted that future reports should focus less on description and more on causes, pressure points, and actions. The Group Executive Director of People confirmed this was the direction of travel.

6.5.4. Q: How are KPIs being used to manage people risks?

A: The Group Executive Director of People confirmed that KPIs were under review, with work ongoing to align them to risk appetite, budget setting, and strategic priorities, including benchmarking where possible.

6.6. It was agreed that further work was required on the People KPIs, including alignment to risk appetite and benchmarking, before any recommendation could be made to the Board.

6.7. It was agreed that, in the interim, existing People KPIs would continue to be monitored, with the previous year's KPIs circulated to Committee members to inform further consideration before any future agreement or recommendation.

7. Finance Update (including Management Accounts)

7.1. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented the Finance Update, highlighting that the forecast surplus had increased since the previous report.

7.2. She explained that the agreed December implementation of the pay award had created additional cost pressure, which had been largely offset by a reduction in employer pension contribution rates.

7.3. She confirmed that overall forecasts therefore remained broadly stable and that the Group was on track to receive a calculated financial health rating of "Good" for the year, with the highest possible score in the banding expected, and all KPIs set by the Board when the budget was approved were on target.

7.4. An update was given on capital expenditure, including progress on transformation funding.

7.5. It was noted that that the cash position was better than forecast for the time of year, but this was a timing issue which would correct itself.

7.6. Agency staffing costs were highlighted as an area of focus and it was confirmed that management action was underway to reduce reliance on agency staff through conversion to permanent roles where appropriate.

7.7. Questions and answers:

7.7.1. Q: Is the current surplus masking underlying structural fragility in the budget?

A: The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources acknowledged that vacancy savings and agency costs required scrutiny but confirmed that the Executive was actively managing this risk.

7.7.2. Q: What is the plan to reduce agency staffing costs?

A: The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources explained that tighter controls had been introduced, with all agency use requiring senior approval. In some areas, long-standing agency staff were being converted to permanent roles to improve quality and reduce cost.

7.7.3. Q: How will success regarding agency spending be measured?

A: Members requested that future reports include clear action plans, timescales and success measures, particularly where spending deviated from approved budgets.

8. Estates Update

8.1. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources provided a detailed Estates Update.

8.2. She confirmed that the Post-16 building had finally received building control sign-off and was now in use by students. She noted, however, that further work was required to address outstanding external issues, and that these matters were being pursued with the contractors.

8.3. She updated members on the F Block refurbishment, confirming that the project had gone out to tender and that options were being explored to balance cost and programme. She explained that decisions on this project would return to governors due to its scale and value.

8.4. She also updated members on the Selby 3G pitch, which was complete but awaiting a community use agreement, and on ongoing accessibility improvements across sites.

8.5. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources outlined progress on a partnership project with Wakefield Council, noting ongoing negotiations regarding the proposed nature of the Group's use of a Council owned building.

8.6. Questions and answers:

8.6.1. Q: What lessons have been learned from the Post-16 build?

A: The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that a lessons-learned exercise would be undertaken once outstanding issues were resolved.

8.6.2. Q: Are governors content with the approach being taken with the Local

Authority regarding the use of one of its buildings?

A: Members agreed that the current approach was appropriate and supported maintaining the organisation's position.

9. Health and Safety Update

9.1. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented the Health and Safety Update, highlighting increased reporting of incidents and near misses. She explained that this reflected improved reporting culture rather than deteriorating safety.

9.2. She noted that there had been two RIDDOR reports made since the last meeting and outlined the nature of reported incidents, noting that these related to individual behaviour rather than systemic failures.

9.3. She also updated members on progress with risk assessments, contractor assurance, CCTV installation in high-risk workshop areas, and planned improvements to reporting KPIs.

9.4. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources asked whether members would prefer more thematic reporting. Members agreed that a more summarised, thematic approach would be helpful going forward.

9.5. Questions and answers:

9.5.1. Q: Should the Committee have KPIs for health and safety?

A: The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources agreed this would be appropriate and proposed developing KPIs for the next academic year.

9.5.2. Q: How does health and safety risk link to the risk register and risk appetite?

A: The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources explained that risk scores had recently been revised to reflect improved controls and that deeper dives on key risks were planned.

10. Finance Strategy

10.1. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources introduced the Finance Strategy, explaining that it was intended as a working document rather than a static strategy.

10.2. She described the purpose of the document as setting out the context, assumptions, risks and emerging pressures facing the organisation over the medium term.

10.3. She emphasised that the strategy did not ask governors to approve specific numbers, but to endorse the direction of travel and the need to begin work now to mitigate potential future pressures.

10.4. She used the analogy of “clouds on the horizon” to describe emerging risks that were not yet critical but required early action.

10.5. Questions and answers:

10.5.1. Q: What will the Board be asked to approve? The long-term forecast was acknowledged but members made it clear that they did not want there to be any suggestion they were recommending the comparatively weak fifth and final year outcome projected in the strategy.

A: The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources confirmed she would separate the strategy from the supporting projected financial information which was to illustrate the potential position should action not be taken.

10.5.2. Q: Does the strategy include clear triggers for action?

A: Members requested clearer indicators, thresholds and decision points. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources agreed to reflect this before the strategy was presented to the Board.

10.6. IT WAS RESOLVED TO recommend the Finance Strategy to the Board for approval, subject to clarifications discussed at the meeting.

11. Financial Planning and Performance Reporting Internal Audit Report

11.1. The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented the Financial Planning and Performance Reporting internal audit report, noting that it provided strong assurance with only one low risk recommendation.

11.2. It was noted that this had been previously reviewed by the Audit Committee and was being shared with the Committee in line with the Board's request that there be sharing of information between committee's where necessary.

11.3. Members welcomed the positive assurance and commended the finance team.

12. Voluntary Redundancy Scheme

12.1. The Group Executive Director of People presented the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme, explaining that it replaced the previous scheme and provided a more robust and transparent framework. She confirmed that the scheme was intended as a tool to support organisational change if required, rather than something that would be used routinely.

12.2. Members discussed clarity around approval routes, value-for-money assessment, equality considerations, and how decisions would align with the scheme of delegation.

12.3. Questions and answers:

12.3.1. Q: Who authorises the voluntary redundancy decisions?

A: The Group Executive Director of People confirmed that decisions would be made in line with delegated authority limits, with appropriate executive and Board oversight.

12.3.2. Q: How is fairness ensured in offering the scheme?

A: The Group Executive Director of People explained that decisions would be evidence-based and supported by best-value and equality assessments.

12.3.3. Q: Is the full process captured in this single document?

A: The Group Executive Director of People noted that it was used in conjunction with other documents. Members asked that reference be made to supporting documents which were to be read in conjunction with the scheme.

12.4. IT WAS RESOLVED TO recommend the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme to the Board for approval.

13. Review of Effectiveness of Meeting and Identification of Emerging Risk

13.1. Members reflected positively on the meeting, noting the quality of discussion and challenge.

13.2. The Committee agreed that emerging risks around staffing costs, agency reliance and medium-term financial sustainability should continue to be monitored closely.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Finance, People and Resources Committee will take place on 23 June 2026.

Signed…………………………………………… Date 23/06/2026

Actions

No.	Minute	Details	Deadline	Responsibility
1	6.6	Future People reports to include clearer KPIs, risk appetite and action-focused assurance.	Next Committee meeting	The Group Executive Director of People
2	6.7	People KPIs to be approved at the next meeting and performance measures to be circulated in the interim	Next Committee meeting	The Group Executive Director of People
3	8.6.1	A Post-16 lessons learned report to be provided	After completion of post-16 snagging works	The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources

		to the Committee		
4	10.6	IT WAS RESOLVED TO recommend the Finance Strategy to the Board for approval, subject to clarifications discussed at the meeting.	Next Board meeting	The Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources
5	12.4	IT WAS RESOLVED TO recommend the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme to the Board for approval.	Next Board meeting	The Group Executive Director of People