

## People Select Committee

A meeting of People Select Committee was held on Monday 2nd March 2026.

**Present:** Cllr Marilyn Surtees (Chair), Cllr Paul Weston (Vice-Chair), Cllr John Gardner, Cllr Nial Innes, Cllr Tony Riordan (sub Cllr Hugo Stratton), Cllr Sylvia Walmsley (sub Cllr Ian Dalgarno) and Cllr Barry Woodhouse

**Officers:** Noel Dennis (Stockton Sixth Form College), Erika Marshall (Education Training Collective), Vanessa Housley (Children Services), Kirsty Grundy and Michelle Gunn (Corporate Services)

**Also in attendance:**

**Apologies:** Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr David Reynard and Cllr Hugo Stratton

### **PEO/54/25 Evacuation Procedure**

The Committee noted the evacuation and housekeeping procedure.

### **PEO/55/25 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **PEO/56/25 Minutes**

AGREED the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **PEO/57/25 Scrutiny Review of Post 16 Provision**

The Committee received a presentation regarding the Post 16 Partnership Communications and Marketing Working Strand from the Business Development Director at Atomix Educational Trust and the Marketing and Business Engagement Director at the Education Training Collective (ETC). The presentation included:

- Schools that the providers engaged with, which included not only the secondary schools within Stockton-on-Tees Borough but also schools across the Tees Valley area.
- The type of activities that took place, which ranged from attending school assemblies/events, open events for young people and their parents/carers, taster sessions and campus tours, mock interviews, and career guidance. Holding sessions with successful graduates and digital marketing via the website, social media and digital campaigns were also taking place. While the providers were engaging with all year groups, with ETC highlighting the Your Future workshop designed to engage younger year groups in career choices, the main focus was Years 9, 10 and 11.
- The growth in applications and enrolments. ETC reported a 24.4 % increase in active applications, with a 6.6% increase in Stockton-on-Tees 2026 school

- leavers application, while Atomix reported an 89.4% year-on-year increase in active applications for Stockton Sixth Form.
- ETC highlighted the challenges they faced in managing capacity at their sites, building new facilities at Bede Sixth Form and NETA.
  - Atomix noted that there was a new team at Stockton Sixth Form College, which were in their second year of their new marketing strategy.
  - Partnerships with industry and alignment with local skills. It was noted that local employers, including businesses and the NHS, worked well with local providers. ETC highlighted that employer demand was driving the balance between academic and vocational training, while Stockton Sixth Form highlighted their partnerships with employers to co-create their T-Level curriculum. When members questioned local employer involvement in T-levels, it was noted that it was important to get a round table of employers together to understand the skills and knowledge required for the next generation.
  - The collaborative approach to develop a communications and marketing initiative promoting studying in Stockton-on-Tees Borough. This collaboration between providers, careers, and industry, was believed to be key to promoting local provision.
  - Data collection that was taking place with students who had left the borough and then returned to study at local colleges as well mystery shopper exercises to competitor colleges. This would provide insights into retention and attraction points. The report on findings from data collection was expected in March 2026.
  - Completed initiatives, which included mapping engagement activity with parents and schools and identifying growth sectors and businesses. It was stressed that it was important to promote creating a life in Stockton-on-Tees, e.g. the value of living, working, playing and studying in the Borough, and place brand messaging had been developed.
  - Planned work and next steps to develop resources to encourage school leavers to stay in-borough for their post-16 education. This included a staff engagement toolkit to enable those who came into contact with school leavers throughout schools pose questions and advise on the options available, identifying successful alumni to help promote the offer, and a digital ambassador scheme to help post out positive messages. A Post Secondary Pre-Open event was planned in September, with representative from all in-borough providers in one venue.

Apprenticeships were discussed with members questioning the messaging around the courses and employer engagement. It was noted that apprenticeships had seen an increase in popularity. Stockton Riverside College made it clear to students that to be enrolled on an apprenticeship they needed to be employed and carrying out the job, attending the SRC for the learning part of the apprenticeship only.

It was questioned how the mystery shopper exercises were undertaken and what information was gaged from them. It was explained that colleagues who were attending open events with their own children who were leaving school were asked to report back. The initial findings suggested that colleges from outside the borough had similar offers to the in-borough providers, and there was some duplication. It was noted that the goodie bags offer of some providers acted as a simple visual prompt and therefore an important incentive for potential students.

When questioned on barriers to attracting school leavers to Stockton-on-Tees, building “stickability” was discussed. Providers were building networks through their engagement activity, so that even if a young person’s cohort from school were not

attending the same provider, they would be aware of who their new cohort would be. The importance of ensuring the student was on the right course at the right provider regardless of whether they lived in-borough or out of borough was also raised. Where students had specific interests and career aspirations not catered for by a provider, they were signposting to the colleges that provided the appropriate course and would expect this to be reciprocated.

It was questioned what data analysis took place for Stockton Sixth Forms website. The Committee were informed that Stockton Sixth Form College had a data dashboard for their website, which included if the people looking at their website were returning, how long they were on the website, and how many clicks/pages were being looked at. This information was helpful in their strategic marketing planning and decision making.

AGREED the information provided be noted.

**PEO/58/25 Chair's Update and Select Committee Work Programme**

Consideration was given to the Committee's work programme.

AGREED the work programme be noted.

Chair: .....