

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE**  
**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY STRATEGIC MEETING 26.09.2022**

**PRESENT:** R Davies (CG and Chair), R Anderson (CG), S Brown (EM), M Laidler (CG); M Lamb (CG) S Lane (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), D Lusardi (CG), P Lynn (CG); M McClintock (CG); S Mirsalehi (CG), P Sharp (CG), S Shepherd (EM) D Still (Staff Governor), P Studd (CG), J Tait (CG).

**OFFICERS:** A Adamson (VP), J Chance (VP), Z Foster (Clerk), S Marshall (ED); B Robinson (DP), O Rodley (VP from October 22), M Russell (VP)

**KEY:** CG College Governor      EM External Member  
DP Deputy Principal      VP Vice Principal  
Clerk to the Corporation      ED Executive Director

**IN ATTENDANCE:** J Gravatt (Aoc) via Teams; H Kemp (TVCA), O Rodley (via Teams)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

H Ashton (CG); C Cannon (EM); M Gaze (CG), S Green (EM); A Hanif (EM); K Parkinson (EA Stephenson (EM), S Wilson (EM), I Wright (CG).

**2. Welcome to New Governors and Staff**

B Robinson was formally invited to his first meeting as was J Tait. In addition, O Rodley (on Teams) was introduced as the new Vice Principal of Quality from October half term.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

R Anderson declared a potential interest in relation to LSIPs.

**4. Governing Body Appointments**

Governors **approved** the appointment of J Tait as College Governor on a four year term and join the Curriculum and Standards Committee.

In addition, R Davies proposed and Governors **approved** the appointment of J Castor as College Governor also on a four year term who would join the Corporate Services Committee.

**5. PART A – CURRENT YEAR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES UPDATE**

**5.1 SAR 2021-22 summary and current year priorities and**

**5.2 Staff Pay, Retention, Comms and Succession Planning - Z Lewis/B Robinson**

Z Lewis reminded members of the current priorities for the College against the backdrop of a volatile external environment. She detailed the six big external factors - policy reforms; workforce/cost pressures; teaching/Ofsted priorities; digital revolution; sustainability; and local priorities.

Z Lewis and B Robinson led governors through all of the main internal factors and challenges via each strand of the strategic plan, drawing attention to the main strategic risk of staff turnover and recruitment and the main approaches to tackling this.

Questions and discussion included: possible reasons for turnover rates (the main ones being flexibility, pay and work-life balance) and the wide ranging College responses to ensure positive recruitment and retention; the national T Level exam issue for Health and Care students and how this had affected students at MC; self assessment and emerging themes; Ofsted preparation both for ITE and more widely; clarification on the range of employer groups (both internal and external) and of action to develop the internal groups further (with the involvement of some link governors); flexible working options and challenges both for the FE sector and more widely locally and nationally; pressures and support for the HR team; the January pay award and options to consider in December; the potential impact of a return to the public sector for Colleges and associated timeline; and likelihood of strike action and the staff view in college including the positive relationship with unions and staff voice.

### **5.3 Enrolment and Finances Update - M Russell**

M Russell detailed the 2021-22 draft outturn which was inline with forecasting and then an outlook for 2022/2023 with the additional cost pressures emerging particularly in relation to energy.

M Russell then gave an up to date account of enrolment thus far by directorate with further detail by department where this varied to plan. He concluded that enrolment would likely align with the budget for the current year but medium and longer term was more complex due to external influences (including sector reclassification; skills for jobs and funding reform; accountability reforms and Local Skills Improvement Plans) hence a prudent plan was in operation.

Governors' discussion and questions included: pay award currently in the plan and options; and interest rates assumptions and impact.

M Laidler left the meeting at 2.30pm

### **5.4 TTE Project – P Bland and M Russell**

P Bland gave a status update on the project which detailed higher costs (albeit within the cash flow parameters).

M Russell detailed positive discussions with the DfE which could result in advancement of funds (though no additional funding resource) which could assist the College in relation to borrowing.

P Bland and M Russell focused on the drivers of the cost increases and project contingencies.

Governor questions and discussion included: a reminder of the process within the tender framework and of requirements for DfE funding; the remaining lease on TTE's current site and related timeframe; the impact of VAT exception (must be non-commercial); and affordability of further rising costs on the budget and expectations.

The groundwork risk was outlined for members and this was discussed in full with a focus on what would be included, and risks and mitigations of the work. There was also consideration of timing, borrowing rates and the risk of not doing the works and when any works would start if approvals given.

M Russell detailed the **new approvals** that were being sought as outlined below:

- approval to commission enabling works package to a value up to £500,000 (which will take the total gross project costs to £0.9m)
- approval to continue to commit cost at risk and proceed to full tender packages to provide final cost certainty
- Governors to note the STEM adaptation review and TVCA funding discussion which could improve the project outlook

Members present ***unanimously agreed*** to the new approvals above.

It was noted that the final approval to commit to construction contract was scheduled for December 2022 in line with the revised contract timelines.

## **6. PART B – FUTURE STRATEGIC PLANNING**

### **6.1 AoC Strategic Sector Overview – J Gravatt (Deputy Chief Executive AoC)**

J Gravatt gave a comprehensive sector update focusing on the external environment (particularly financial and policy related); energy/employment and finance; regulation and oversight of colleges; and College decision making.

Governors' questions included: what the priority activities for the AoC were to support the sector? J Gravatt – primarily pushing the government to understand the contribution of colleges on skills and growth and building relationships with new ministers with a focus articulated from Colleges on funding, finance, simpler regulation for the sector and understanding the breadth of what colleges do; and how Colleges might get back on the government agenda in the current climate (amidst four education secretaries in eighteen months) including the feeding through of the skills shortage issue for employers.

Z Lewis thanked J Gravatt on behalf of the Governing Body.

### **6.2 Local Strategic Priorities H Kemp (Group Director of Business and Skills – TVCA)**

H Kemp gave an overview of the Combined Authority's work to bring skills and business together.

She detailed the priorities of the strategic and economic local plans and highlighted a broad approach to digital skills as being one of the key areas of focus. She outlined support for new jobs and sectors; the adult education policy and strategy for the longer term 'Stay Local Go Far'. She detailed approaches to employer engagement (including the LSIP below); the local job environment; the positive devolution of adult education to increase flexibility; the role of Colleges and ensuring the system works for both employers and colleges going forward. She also highlighted business led skills and gaps and work with local businesses.

Z Lewis gave additional context in relation to how the flexibilities of devolution had allowed the College to respond well to improving adult skills with the significant growth in short courses led by R Gray and her team in Adult Education.

#### **6.2.1 LSIP Tees Valley Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan – R Anderson**

R Anderson detailed the work of the Chamber of Commerce in relation to the government policy on improving local skills as per the plan within the papers. She outlined the areas of consideration under the Tees Valley Trailblazer (green energy/net zero; health and social care and transferable skills (including digital, professional, project management and finance) and of the close work with TVCA, employers and Colleges.

R Anderson detailed the timeline for the next stages for the Governing Body.

Governor questions and discussion included: next steps on the LSIP regarding funding and support; the complexities surrounding planning for jobs not currently in the area (e.g. green energy) and outcomes of the Green Job Task Group report in relation to this; concerns over job displacement and how this might be minimized including flexibilities for students; making pathways clearer and for TVCA to manage relationships and account management; complexities of employer needs (experience and skills not just skills) and of a focus on

developing employees more within the business; the profile of the local economy regarding lower level skilled jobs; impact move to outcome related funding for colleges; the impact of lack of business density; the skills set requirements for some key areas (e.g. green energy) and impact on local job economy; and the College's position in relation to listening to the changing skills needs.

The Head of Student Engagement and two student reps joined the meeting for the final section.

### **6.3 A Reflection on current Strategic Plan Progress – Z Lewis**

Z Lewis introduced a shortened session on the strategic plan progress including the commissioning of another EMSI economic map.

She detailed the progress to the plan which was due to end 2023 (having been extended once) and asked Governors to consider the current plan and whether it should be further extended or fully reviewed (Evolution or Revolution) within the current climate post Covid.

After table discussions Governors' general feedback included: that much of the plan was relevant and should evolve in a changing world; that the LSIP report could be useful in tailoring the strategy; new SLT and wider management team may need more time to embed before strategic overhaul; adding 'flexible' to One Team to recognize that people are changing careers; shift of emphasis within the current plan (e.g. in relation to diversity and values); and additions to one community in relation to careers, attendance; pastoral care.

In conclusion, ***the Governing Body were in agreement*** to update the current strategic plan and extend until July 2025 with a first draft being available around March 2023 with final approval around July 2023.

## **7. Matters for Publication**

No restricted matters were identified.

All presentations would be available through Board Intelligence after the meeting.

## **8. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

**8.1** Monday 17th October 2022 at 5pm

## **9. Any other Urgent Business**

None taken

## **10. Reserved Matters**

No reserved matters

The meeting ended at 5.010pm