

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY STRATEGIC UPDATE MEETING 01.10.2024**

PRESENT: R Davies (CG and Chair), A Bradford (Student Governor Rep); S Brown (CO), D Budd (CO), J Castor (CG), A Hassack (CG), M Lamb (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), D Lusardi (CG), A Pajura-Jaszczak (Staff Gov), P Sharp (CG), D Still (Staff Gov), I Wallace (CG), L Woods (CG).

OFFICERS A Adamson (VP), Z Foster (Head of Governance), S Langstaff (VP), S Marshall (VP), K Parkinson (VP), G Potts (VP), B Robinson (DP)

IN ATTENDANCE: For items 6 and 7: R Shuttleworth (Chief Technology Officer) and J Wells (Director of Digital Innovation).

KEY: CG College Governor CO Co-opted Governor DP Deputy Principal VP Vice Principal

Ahead of the formal meeting, Governors had a tour of the completed TTE Build.

1. Apologies for Absence

R Anderson (CG), I Anwar (CG), C Cannon (CO), A Coleman-Cooke (CO) T Edgcombe (Student Governor), A Hanif (CO), M King (CO), S Lane (CG), P Lynn (CG); O-R Manners (Student Governor), M McClintock (CG), S Mirsalehi (CG), B Murphy (CG), O Rodley (VP), J Tait (CG), I Wright (CG).

2. Appointment of new College Governor

Governors **approved** the appointment of Beverley Murphy as College Governor for a four year term of office as of 1 October 2024 and that she sits on the Curriculum and Standards Committee.

3. Welcome to new VP of Finance and Registry

R Davies welcomed S Langstaff to her first meeting.

4. Declarations of Interest – none declared.

5. Subcontractor Fees and Charges Policy

S Langstaff gave a brief overview of the annually reviewed Subcontractor Fees and Charges Policy.

Governors then **approved** the policy for immediate use and publication.

6. Strategic Plan Update

Z Lewis gave an overview of the current strategic plan which was due to come to an end 31 July 2025, drawing attention to the mission, values and main pillars of the component parts of the plan which members of SLT would detail individually.

Due to uncertainties with policy from the new Government and the ongoing qualification reform review, consideration of a new strategic plan would be delayed until later in the year when there was greater clarity.

The structure of the meeting would instead give an update on where the College was against the current plan, a detailed update on progress on a new digital strategy (which would include AI) and conclude with several deep dive sessions for governors with managers.

6.1 Our Partners – Z Lewis outlined the various ways that the College was working closely with external partners to shape policy and adapt the College offer; through meeting local needs, government priorities and being part of strong collaborations both locally (FE+, North East IoT) and nationally (AoC, ETF, Open University and the College Collective).

She drew particular attention to the potential impact of Labour's skills policies on the College and sector which offered both opportunities and challenges. Influencing mechanisms were highlighted with particular attention drawn to the Gatsby Curriculum Review which B Robinson was involved in, and Skills England more widely.

In relation to achieving the College's mission 'to develop skills, knowledge and behaviours that help individuals to thrive and enhance the region's economic and social prosperity, Z Lewis highlighted some emerging SAR/QIP priorities for the forthcoming year of learner progression, recruitment and retention of staff, and attendance and Strategic Update Minutes 01.10.24

persistent absence. There would also be a focus on strategic developments in digital, preparation for qualification reform, influencing government and increased NEETs capacity. These initial priorities would be shaped through the Governors SAR validation process (11 November 2024).

6.2 Our Ambition

B Robinson took Governors through progress against the objectives highlighting: strong achievement rates across all provision types; pioneering work in the approach towards curriculum reform; challenges associated with being the biggest provider of T Levels; improvements in learner satisfaction/quality of CPD/increasingly reflective practitioners as a result of the Taking Teaching Higher strategy and next steps as the strategy nears its end; digital skills; and the exceptional GCSE English and Maths resit results achieved in 2023-2024.

He then went on to draw attention to areas of focus, centred around progress, for 2024-25 (within the uncertain landscape of curriculum reform) including: developing the work on positive destinations; embedding DfE progress metrics within teachers' appraisals; increasing self driven professional development and enhanced support for new staff; innovation of recruitment, support and retention, managing workload/use of AI and better embedding employer engagement across programmes.

6.3 Our Commitment

G Potts detailed overall good progress across objectives within this area drawing out the specific successes with BELPS, Employer Advisory Boards and working with inward investors, alongside an Outstanding Ofsted judgement for Apprenticeships and Adult Provision and strong for meeting the regional Skills Need.

Key developments for the forthcoming year would include: developing the client management approach; commercial training; and work experience and industrial placements; within the new policy regime of Skills England and the Skills Levy.

6.4 Our Community

A Adamson gave a brief appraisal of the successes from the past year including the overseas opportunities for students within the Turing Scheme, greater number of enrichment and employer engagement activities and the Careers Beacon Award to name a few.

The five key areas of focus for 2024-2025 were; attendance and persistent absenteeism; further developing an attachment aware and trauma informed approach via the Proclaim programme; male mental health, greater consistency in personal development and a wider SEN support cross college.

6.5 Our Team

K Parkinson detailed good progress against the People Strategy KPIs over 2023-2024 (which would be due for renewal in 2025) and referenced particular success with a reduction in staff turnover and IIP Gold accreditation.

Areas of focus for 2024-2025 would include: developing leaders with the launch of the Leadership Excellence pathway for all people managers; supporting the Engineering department; revamping of recruitment; system development and implementation; and IIP action planning.

6.6 Our Resilience

S Langstaff and S Marshall detailed progress over 2023-2024 including: that bank covenants had been met; good financial health; a financial plan approved which would increase cash balances over three years; a successful £20M campus development programme nearing completion; achievement of the Phase 1 Sustainability Action Plan and significant investments in IT and MC Click.

S Langstaff took governors through the enrolment figures headlines as of September: very positive 16-18 (with some likely lagged in year growth); increases in Adult; increase in Grant Income; and an update on negotiations with TVCA regarding in-year funding and the current risk on delivery whilst these negotiations were taking place; a slightly lower enrolment for Access to HE; below target expectations in HE; and noting that Project S had not been included within the original plan. In conclusion, it was expected that this would result in an increase to the bottom line, giving confidence in the ability to deliver the financial plan.

S Marshall reminded Governors of the strategic investments throughout the campus including the outreach centres in Sunderland and Newcastle. She also gave an update in respect of car parking options and negotiations.

In more detail, the priorities for the forthcoming year would focus on: sustainability and the second phase FE pathway with a new action plan coming to Corporate Services in December; negotiations regarding leases for 2QS; Russell Street, the Newcastle Office and additional space for Adult Education programmes; and an update on the TTE lease end including delays. In addition, the Digital Strategy (including AI) would also be a primary focus.

Questions included: energy savings and the associated complications particularly with the move away from gas; clarification on current capacity with carparking (which was just manageable) and of immediate plans to increase some capacity with TTE, alongside the longer term plans under negotiation.

Digital Strategy/AI Update

R Shuttleworth gave a brief appraisal of the success of the 2021-2025 Digital Strategy which had gone beyond initial expectations, and of plans for the next phase which would be more transitional in approach (2025-2028) within the rapidly changing technical landscape.

J Wells then outlined the approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI) with progress from February 2023 to the present time which included: development on an early policy and framework for staff; AI induction and core Thrive content for all learners; shared best practice with the wider education community; and the implementation of AI process improvements.

He detailed some of the main challenges which centred around both a lack of official guidance and a variety of learner challenges such as age restrictions on popular tools, learner AI education, and inappropriate usage.

The proposed objectives within the new Digital Strategy would be:

- Equality and digital accessibility for all
- Improved learner outcomes
- Enhanced productivity
- Seamless customer experience

The strategy would split into i) intelligent environments (AI and data) and ii) core systems.

There would be no standalone AI strategy although the AI policy would be annually refreshed to encompass the rate of change.

The priorities (and associated timeline for the next twelve months) of the Digital Transformation Group were detailed for Governors which centred around teacher workload, customer service and productivity.

In conclusion, Governors were reminded of the emerging QiP Priorities:

Areas for Improvement	Learner Progress, Recruitment and Retention of Staff; Attendance and Persistent Absenteeism
Strategic Developments	New Digital Strategy; preparation for Quals Reform; Influencing Government; and NEETS increase capacity.

7. Deep Dive Workshop session

The following 5 themes were considered in two sessions by the Governing Body and SLT(T) members:

- Attendance and Persistent Absenteeism
- Progress and Quals Reform
- Meet new SLT and Skills Policy
- IIP, Recruitment and Retention
- Digital Strategy

Governors found the deep dive approach useful in developing their understanding and B Robinson and Z Lewis concluded by bringing together the key concerns, risks and priorities within the current complex environment.

8. Matters for Publication – no restricted items were identified.

9. Date and Time of Next Meetings

- Governing Body (Ordinary) – Monday 21 October 2024 – 5-8pm, R Davies informed Governors that L Woods would be chairing that meeting
- Governing Body SAR validation - Monday 11 November 2024 – 8.30-2.30 pm. Governors were encouraged to attend this session which would formalize the QiP emerging themes and priorities
- Governing Body (Ordinary) – Monday 16 December 2024 – 5-8pm

10. Any other Business – none taken

The meeting ended at 5.05pm