

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING – 04.07.2025**

PRESENT: P Lynn (CG and Chair), M Gaze (CG), A Hassack (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), D Still (Staff Governor), A Shaffi (Co-opted Governor), J Tait (CG) via Teams (till 3.50pm), and L Woods (CG).

OFFICERS: A Adamson (VP), J Barwell (AP), P Blewitt (AP), Z Foster (Clerk), R Gray (AP), L McKenna (Director of HE), T Pierce (AD), G Potts (VP), B Robinson (DP), O Rodley (VP), P Watt (AP).

IN ATTENDANCE FOR RELEVANT ITEM:

C Duggan (AD), D Payne (AD), N Simpson (Head of Quality – Apprenticeships), R Walsh (English and Maths Manager).

Key: CG – College Governor, CO – Co-opted Governor, DP – Deputy Principal, VP – Vice Principal, AP – Assistant Principal, AD – Associate Director, Head of T & L – Head of Teaching and Learning.

1. Apologies for Absence - C Cannon (CO), S Lane (CG), C Yule (AP).

P Lynn gave a warm welcome to L McKenna who was the new Director of HE, with the retirement of P Stone.

2. Declarations of Interest – no declarations.

3. Department Presentations

3.1 Business and Professional – J Barwell detailed progress against the 5 areas for improvement (Afls), then moved onto in-year emerging issues (change in learner landscape; staff stability; TLA inconsistencies and progress on BTEC Year 2) with progress and actions outlined. The presentation concluded with detail of plans for 2025-2026 with a new business curriculum; a focus on developing project based learning and soft skills; technical education in Business focus; continued drive with TLA and supporting staff to excel; and developing relationships further with professional bodies.

Discussion and questions included: how new staff were clear on expectations and areas of improvement; how TLA inconsistencies had manifested through learning walks, progress and feedback and resulting triangulation and actions to improve; support for new staff coming in from industry; confirmation that T Levels were more technical focussed; potential impact on attendance/behaviour of second choice options for students and detail of how appropriate second choices were determined for students.

3.2 Engineering – D Payne detailed progress against the 7 Afls before drawing out 3 in year issues (student survey results, workshop layouts and student rep meetings) and actions, progress and future plans to resolve. Finally, 4 future developments were highlighted – focus on health and safety performance, standards and behaviours, CPD for staff on new equipment, development of the process area and rectification of TTE separation plant mechanical issues post audit, and supporting a new group of NHD Libyan students from March 2026.

Questions and discussion included: the impact of the skills and competency analysis (both technical and pedagogical) which gave greater knowledge to ADs on staff specialist areas thereby ensuring appropriately assigned units/cover units and support to develop knowledge further; tailored recruitment based on skills gaps; upskilling of all staff on HSE, and training on new equipment; consideration of the timescale for the actions/CPD; how the department was ensuring there were no pedagogical gaps going forward; an update on how the international HND group were progressing (which was going well); and developments to further support HE in the department including a dedicated HE lab workshop.

4. Minutes of Meeting of 11.03.2025 and of Curriculum Planning meeting of 09.06.2025 were both approved as correct records.

5. Matters Arising – all resolved.

6. Principal/CEO Verbal Overview and Risk Summary

Z Lewis gave a general overview of stability, progress and increased consistency across College faculties this year.

B Robinson drew attention to the high level of collaboration and sharing across the sector from College colleagues and O Rodley highlighted some improvements with attendance, albeit recognising there was more to do (in particular with low level).

Z Lewis led the Committee to some areas of potential discussion for the meeting in relation to risk including: destinations – whether this should be on the QiP next year (outlining factors both in the College's control and outwith e.g. economic market); whether qualification reforms was still a risk; the percentage of new teachers next year and increase to the ITE programme; the likely capping of course numbers for TTE; and more widely the pace of change in technology, specifically AI.

Initial questions and discussion focused on destinations including: whether there had been any cost/benefit analysis on work with employers (assuming that these activities would increase destination outcomes) with confirmation that there had been some initial analysis which indicated that the College costs were approx. 10% of the income it generated which was in keeping with the general rule of thumb in colleges, alongside ongoing and regular review on the value of differing interactions/work with employers and employer led business; detail of a positive example with Northumbrian Water project for students and the impact of that and how similar such projects could be rolled out with other companies and with other student groups; the future use of the newly developed CRM data dashboards in targeting opportunities; consideration of the College focus/investment in the current climate of increased demographic and youth unemployment; how the College was being more selective regarding publication and sponsorship offers particularly in light of positive relationships being developed more widely by key SLT staff; parental engagement; the potential value of case study related press releases; and the benefit of the College have greater and wider sector involvement (Skills England, DfE, etc); how the College was preparing students for broader employment beyond destination/career specific skills, with recognition these were essential; how to increase employers understanding and active engagement with supporting the longer term skills acquisition of students and how a direct approach on their contribution may assist, albeit recognising the complexity of this within a largely SME local climate; and general appreciation of the lack of apprenticeship opportunities to support the supply chain (a policy contrary to most other countries).

7. QIP/Development Plan Update

O Rodley outlined progress against the four College priorities, all of which were on track against actions. He gave further detail in relation to the two areas which were still amber i) progress towards target with learner progress over time being in a much improved position, but acknowledgement that ii) persistent absenteeism would likely carry over into next year, particularly due to its close association and impact on learner progress.

Questions and discussion included: the circular effect of all of the 4 areas for improvement (Afl) on each other; early intervention with new staff on ensuring the quality of TLA; and how the College was supporting its experienced staff both currently and in the future (including use of Government incentives for teaching and use of feedback).

8. Quality of Education – Intent

B Robinson briefly presented his written report. There were no further questions.

9. Quality of Education – Implementation

T Pierce gave an update on progress in relation to the three Afl highlighting CPD and support developments for improved staff understanding of metacognition skills, and new staff support with an early careers framework which followed a 3 year progression path.

Discussion and questions included: whether new staff for September already had the pedagogical skills with confirmation that this was varied (with immediate support being given via a dedicated bootcamp, in addition to mentoring, for those from industry); the potential introduction of an ITE apprenticeship in the future with confirmation that for the current year the focus would be on the bigger cohort of full time ITE; and how staff training was differentiated between faculties with T Pierce detailing the support mechanisms led by the Heads of Teaching and Learning.

10. Quality of Education – Impact

O Rodley drew particular attention to the College being number 1 in the country for apprenticeships with a forecast this year to improve.

In addition, he confirmed very high learner satisfaction (96% overall); positive destinations; learners' preference shift from HE to apprenticeships in terms of destinations; and, as discussed elsewhere, the ongoing focus of persistent absenteeism and related actions. He also briefly outlined the NARTs data for the Committee.

Questions and discussion included: Burnley College's intervention report as a result of inflation of achievement rates and the comprehensive assurances which had been sought by Z Lewis that this did not occur at MC, detail of which would be shared with the full Board at its 10 July meeting; and clarification on the decrease of learners progressing onto another course in the College with more continuing into a second year; and the wider impact of more two years courses on national achievement rates going forward.

The Committee noted and congratulated the team on the positive progress with English and Maths over the year.

Work Experience – G Potts highlighted the successful Turing Scheme application. He then detailed 32 work experience placements to Balfour Beatty and the team focus to develop more digital work experience opportunities by looking at current employers who have large IT departments. He also confirmed the Employer Support fund money, which whilst an excellent support, was 50% ringfenced for Construction T Level learners, thereby reducing the flexibility.

The Committee discussed which areas came under the Construction umbrella (for access to Employer Support Fund).

G Potts also gave assurance to the Committee that work experience of students was directly linked to their course of study.

Further questions included: an update on the CRM which was now fully cleansed and dashboard led ready to be fully utilized across a wide range of areas; and of the level of challenge to get work experience going forward and how the College was using a multi-pronged approach to tackle this including use of greater flexibilities now in the system.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the Work Experience team and all those staff members involved with seeking meaningful work experience activities for students.

11. Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes

A Adamson gave an update to her report confirming that 60.5% of students had now had four employer encounters and 98.3% having had at least one. In addition, she outlined the Social Action work by 80% of students (a huge participation growth); more detail on the Turing Scheme funding (£205k) and activity for over 90 students across 5 continents; and the ongoing focus on attendance through the Positive Behaviour policy, which was being further embedded into staff practice over the coming year.

Governors' questions and discussion focused on: feedback/evaluation of the Turing Scheme experiences with students giving a range of positives including: increased confidence, resilience, new skills (e.g. cooking), teamwork and independence (e.g. flying, being out the country etc.); and confirmation that 77% of Turing Scheme students were from disadvantage cohorts.

Detail was also given on S Donnison's replacement (R Angus) who would be starting at the beginning of the new academic year.

12. Provision for Learners with High Needs

C Duggan gave a positive update in relation to the 2 KPIs for the department. He then gave further detail on the risk associated with High Needs Funding and of ongoing discussions with one particular LA. The introduction of Team Teach was also highlighted which was supporting the positive behaviour approach by the department and wider College.

Governors' questions and discussion included: clarification on job outcome figures; the complexity of comparative figures for High Needs as cohorts year on year often had very different profiles; the legal perspective in relation to supporting High Needs funding and the issue in relation to the Thrive programme for one local authority; and the benefits of the Team Teach system in feeder secondary schools locally who used it and the benefit of having this framework throughout the local education system.

13. Provision Type Reports .

13.1 Education Programmes for Young People - P Watt outlined the main challenges for the faculty next year including: persistent absenteeism and effect on progress over time/results; and staffing especially in hard to recruit areas which were not yet fully staffed.

13.2 Apprenticeships - N Simpson gave a positive appraisal of performance, a slightly decreased retention figure, and expectations that the withdrawals will likely be in line with the previous year by end of July. He also outlined that against the accountability framework; all measures were green. Attention was drawn to staff turnover for Construction and Engineering as an ongoing risk, and N Simpson gave clarification on employer feedback figures (and plans to get further returns) and of detailed work to further address any identified learning gaps.

Questions and discussion focussed on: male/female ratios and the variations depending upon the course studied; Engineering cohorts and in-College actions to increase the number of female students and how this could be developed more widely within the Construction and Engineering sectors to support a better gender representation; and confirmation of the low number (5) of breaks in learning.

N Simpson also gave detail of an apprentice who had been put forward for AoC's Apprentice of the Year which Governors were delighted to hear.

13.3 English and Maths – R Walsh drew out some key points beyond his report including: that overall the department was in a strong position with progress looking positive; increased use of Century Tech; and the positive response to the Department hosting the ME+ Conference this year.

Governors congratulated the team on the progress, noting that this was particularly difficult to achieve such positive outcomes at FE level.

B Robinson updated the Committee of the Curriculum and Assessment review which may change policy in relation to English and Maths in the future.

13.4 Adult Learning Programme – R Gray outlined positive progress for 3 out of the 4 Afl for the faculty and gave further detail in relation to ESOL which was amber.

Questions and discussion focussed on: clarification on the appendices with agreement to change titling for one of these (to Belp completions); destinations; reduced ESOL numbers and the impact of this; recording of ESOL achievement particularly for transient students; the use of bootcamps by employers; and a Construction Technology College hubs bid update with confirmation the College had put in its own bid and was supporting other local bids.

Z Lewis gave an update in relation to work with Middlesbrough Council on an outreach NEETs provision.

13.5 Subcontracted Provision - R Gray gave a comprehensive update on progress across the subcontractors, drawing attention to the revised allocation in respect of one and the reasons behind this.

Governors' queried the reasoning behind the size of contract given to a new contract and lessons going forward which was then discussed in some detail.

13.6 T Levels – J Barwell outlined a positive picture and detailed two further T Levels coming through for 2025-2026 (and related upskilling of current staff and onboarding of new staff to accommodate the growth). She also described a pilot this year which pushed back the employer set project and the benefits of this, with hopes that this would positively affect results. Finally, she highlighted staff involvement with CPD both within College and involvement with national conferences to share best practice.

B Robinson informed the Committee of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) Partnership success for the College explaining that this was the College equivalent of Research Schools and Governors acknowledged this fantastic achievement and future benefit to the region's students, and the Committee congratulated all involved with this.

14. Terms of Reference Review

Z Foster presented an updated version of the Terms of Reference which the Committee considered (as per the 3 year cycle), ahead of **agreeing** to recommend for approval by the Governing Body at its 10 July 2025 meeting.

15. Committee Review of Top Risks

The Committee concluded that the risks remained as was under Item 6, noting the importance of Government policy on these areas.

It was **agreed** that staffing remained the largest risk, and there was some discussion on the potential for national change in relation to FE pay going forward and of the impact of the ITE bursary (which was of particular value to graduates) and the value of marketing this further.

16. Dates of Meetings for 2025-2026

- 16.1** SAR Validation meeting Tuesday 4 November 2025 10-3pm
- 16.2** Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 2pm
- 16.3** Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 2pm
- 16.4** Tuesday 9 June 2026 at 5pm (Curriculum Planning)
- 16.5** Tuesday 30 June 2026 at 2pm

17. Any Other Business - none taken

The meeting closed at 4.41pm