

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING 22.10.2025**

PRESENT: L Woods (CG/Chair), R Anderson (CG), J Castor (CG), H Day (CG), G Dobson (CG), M Gaze (CG) via Teams, Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive, P Lynn (CG), K Marshall (Student Governor) from 5.30pm, M McClintock (CG), A Pajura-Jaszczak (Staff Gov) via Teams, S Mirsalehi (CG) from 6pm via Teams, A Shaffi (CG), P Sharp (CG), D Still (Staff Gov), M Wells (CG).

OFFICERS: A Adamson (VP) (Teams), Z Foster (Head of Governance), S Marshall (VP), K Parkinson (VP), G Potts (VP), B Robinson (DP), O Rodley (VP), M Wilson – Ex. Director of Finance.

KEY: CG College Governor CO Co-opted Governor DP Deputy Principal
VP Vice Principal Clerk to the Corporation

1. Apologies for Absence

I Anwar (CG), A Hassack (CG), D Lusardi (CG), P Neal (CG), J Tait (CG), I Wallace (CG), C Whitehead (VP).

L Woods introduced the meeting with her perspective of taking on the Chair role at an exciting time with the White Paper which seemed very positive for FE. She also outlined the different approach to this meeting in response to governors' feedback and the continuing improvements to reports and presentations to best support governance.

K Marshall was welcomed as new Student Governor when she joined the meeting at 5.30pm.

2. Declarations of Interest

R Anderson declared any relevant interest in respect of LSIP, the Stamp Exchange in Newcastle (as the NECC are NSG's landlord) and Place Leaders Partnership.

3. Minutes

3.1 Unconfirmed Minutes of 10 July 2025 – approved as a correct record

3.2 Unconfirmed Minutes of 7 October 2025 (Strategic Planning) - approved as a correct record

3.3 Confirmation of Written Resolution

- **Mechanical Maintenance Contract Award (3 October 2025)** – the decision was confirmed

4. Matters Arising – most matters arising had been attended to or were in hand.

A Adamson clarified the poverty figures from the last meeting (which were from the local authority), and she confirmed that future quotations would always be accompanied by the source.

5. Strategic Overview

5.1 SLT Update (presentation)

Z Lewis introduced the pilot SLT presentation format for the Governing Body meeting which would frame the meeting for Governors with greater detail being available via the recommendations and through the Committees' work.

External Context – Z Lewis outlined excellent progress in the strategic planning consultation and accompanying activities thus far which would give governors much to consider at the February strategic planning weekend (including the changes to Ofsted inspections and the Post 16 Strategy within the white paper). She outlined the key challenges, vision and outcomes as determined by the Skills Minister then highlighted some key aspects of the white paper including:

- The vision for a world-leading skills system which would be focused on employer needs, innovation, and improving lives through high-quality pathways and adult retraining.
- The emphasis on AI and technology and ensuring all age groups were equipped for the digital revolution
- Reducing NEET rates among young people.
- Strengthening Further Education (FE) to elevate colleges as specialist institutions with support for leadership and staff development.
- University reform: Encouraging alignment with economic needs, specialisation, and value for students through differentiated missions. Fees to rise in line with inflation – with quality standards
- Qualifications overhaul: Introduction of V Levels, revised English and Maths Level 1–3 qualifications and the anticipated Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR) outcome

- Teacher development with a commitment to better initial training, professional growth, and retention strategies for college staff.
- Funding and infrastructure with Investment in 16–19 education, Technical Excellence Colleges, and capital grants totalling over £2bn. Furthermore, support and encouragement to seek funding from local authorities
- Collaboration and inclusion: Promoting college-university pathways, mental health support, SEND inclusion, and delivery via Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Some sector nervousness over the introduction of V Levels was noted as nothing further was known, although T Levels were still being mooted as the gold standard. There was a consultation out with V Levels expected to be introduced from 2027 (a very rapid timeframe).

Governor questions and discussion focused around: sector and College concerns re course removal particularly for disadvantaged students (and ongoing lobbying to delay defunded courses); acknowledgement that the College was well placed in relation to T Levels which were being positively delivered; the anticipated change to English and Maths resits with the stepping stone qualification which was broadly welcomed; annual capital allocations which would hugely benefit the sector/budgets; pay equality for staff noting that the funding rates increase for priority sectors would support the possibility of some parity, although a lack of consideration for disadvantage remained an issue; and clarification on university fees increase and respective impact on colleges.

B Robinson informed governors that further detail would be shared at Curriculum and Standards December meeting.

Our Resilience

Z Lewis reminded governors of the positive enrolment figures shared at the Strategic Planning session with further movement having taken place since.

B Robinson drew particular attention to improvements for HE enrolment where there had been a reduction in the drop out rate which had improved that outlook.

Finance 2025-2026 – Z Lewis confirmed that there would be some options for areas of investment/support for consideration for the February strategic planning session with SLT doing some further work currently on those, some of which were shared by way of example. She also detailed an improved set of Management Accounts which would allow for further expediting the increase to 40 cash days and investment in high risk areas (e.g. Maths teachers).

Campus and Digital – S Marshall gave a brief overview confirming: identification of in-year priorities for IT against the new strategy; positive behaviour around the campus; use of new modular classrooms for TTE; progression in relation to Salix and GB Solar projects and an update in relation to the TTE mezzanine where the deed of variation was currently with Middlesbrough Council for review. In addition, she gave an update to the Place Leaders partnership and role of the College within this (R Anderson declared an interest in this on behalf of the NECC).

Our Team – K Parkinson drew out some key highlights including: an excellent staff survey with 94% staff satisfaction overall; ongoing positive relationships with unions; 3.1% staff turnover and detail behind this; apprenticeship KPI and plans to improve numbers back up to 3%; IIP work, career progression activities particularly manager development; and festive planning including the return of the Children's Christmas party.

Our Community – A Adamson outlined the main changes to the Ofsted Framework and associated toolkit related to the participation work within the College. She drew particular attention to the 5 point grading scale, report cards, increased focus on inclusion, wellbeing and workload of staff; how the standards would be met for the top two gradings, participation and development within the new framework and College progress (as detailed in slide 18 of the presentation), and the development of inclusion dashboards.

Our Commitment – G Potts gave an overview of progress against the key areas of activity (slide 21) which was all progressing well, with the exception of Smart Assessor in which he detailed the current position and future plans should this not improve. The Memorandum of Understanding with Thirteen Group was also highlighted as one of the positive local collaborations, alongside new employers coming on board with the BELPs. Finally, he updated on positive developments within International including the use of the College over the half term holidays for such activity.

Our Ambition – B Robinson detailed progress across *Intent* (growth in skills shortages and work with employers to shape the curriculum); *Implementation* with curriculum design and work with Gatsby; and *Impact* with the KPIs as detailed under item 5.4. He also reminded Governors of the ITE Ofsted Inspection which was due in the Spring term and of preparatory work including a mock inspection in November (further detail of which would come to Curriculum and Standards Committee).

Emerging QiP Priorities 2025-2026 – O Rodley reminded governors of the priorities that were coming through and likely form the basis of attention for 2025-2026:

- Persistent absence (L2 and below)
- High grade attainment (progress of learners with high prior attainment)
- Learner destinations (in current climate of rising unemployment)
- Recruitment and retention of staff (particularly early career)

He informed Governors that the agenda and data pack for the SAR Validation process on 4 November 2025 would be coming through during the half term holiday, and he encouraged all governors to attend.

Governors' asked whether T Level students destinations were tracked and if so whether studying for T Levels increased opportunities in the specified industry studied, with confirmation that generally T Level students were more successful in getting destinations in those sectors (both at College and national levels).

5.2 Strategic Risks Report

Z Lewis drew attention to the **1 red risk** which was staff turnover and retention, where there had been a leveling out of turnover at 12-13%, albeit with a somewhat spiky profile and in a climate where more staff than ever would be required over the coming few years, keeping it as the main risk for the College.

She also drew attention to key movement (both up and down) and reasons behind these. In terms of future risks, it was likely that AI may be added as an explicit risk at the next SLT Risk Management Group (November).

5.3 Principal/Chief Executive's Report

Z Lewis gave an update to her report and drew particular attention to the positive relationships with TVCA and progress such as the 3 year rolling grant funding for colleges.

Governors asked about the cessation of funding for employers with apprenticeships with confirmation that the funding had simply run out with no other alternative being available.

5.4 Strategic Plan including Corporate KPI Update

O Rodley detailed the KPI summary of the end of year position. He drew attention to the red areas including GCSE Maths and English, apprenticeship in the workforce (already drawn attention to within 5.1) and ESOL achievement (noting that adult GCSE were low numbers).

Governor discussion and questions included: clarification on High Needs Achievement (2024-2025) with slightly lower overall achievement reached, albeit only a small gap between High Needs and peers and a reminder of the future changes with inclusion reporting via the new dashboards; whether relationships with employers were maintained after skills bootcamps and whether learners stayed in learning with confirmation that both were the case wherever possible but this being dependent upon the bootcamp (with welding and electrical given as examples where relationships had been extended); and further detail of plans to recruit more apprenticeships.

5.5 Accountability Statement Update

O Rodley gave a brief appraisal of the statement which resulted in **1 red measure** at the end of last year - over 90% positive destinations for school leavers, which would be part of the QiP priorities for the forthcoming year.

6. Student Experience

6.1 QiP Update – O Rodley detailed significant progress in a couple of areas (learner progress and safety and security) and the focus this year on achievement for those students with higher prior attainment. He also outlined progress against persistent absenteeism and new teacher retention.

Questions included: whether persistent absenteeism was a national issue and where had it been successfully addressed with confirmation that the College attendance rate was good but the College target was high particularly as persistent absenteeism was a known significant impact on learning outcomes; and the differences between students who 'could not' come into College' and 'won't come' being discussed particularly in light of root causes (often emotional based) and ways to support once those causes were known; and how the College's attendance figures were higher than within secondary education locally (other than for one school which also took a trauma informed approach) which bucked the usual trend.

A Adamson informed governors that there would be some future benchmarking from the National Association for Managers of Student Services (NAMS) over coming months. Furthermore, within the new framework, the percentage of absenteeism was less of a focus, rather what colleges were doing to support learners being the focus and it was hoped the College's trauma informed and relationship approach to ensure a safe place where students belong would be a positive in this regard.

6.2 Safeguarding Annual Report 2024-2025

A Adamson outlined the new standards (under Ofsted's revised framework) in which Safeguarding would be seen as 'being met or not' and she confirmed that standards were being met within the College. She also detailed an increase in the volume of incidents, particularly through staff reporting incidents.

Governors discussion and questions included: how the College supported the staff dealing with students affected by suicide attempts/ideation which included case reviews with staff, appropriate distribution of cases, monthly and ad hoc supervision of safeguarding leads, and more widely reflective supervision for all staff within the Proclaim programme of support and training, alongside the usual Employee Assistant Programme; whether a case study or two could be added to the annual report (anonymized) to give a flavour of support given with A Adamson confirming that this may be possible (depending upon publication sharing) but case studies were shared via the Safeguarding and Welfare Committee as a more suitable forum generally; and reasons for increased staff reporting which included better training, confidence, supported by an easy online form on the staff home page.

6.3 Written Update – Student Voice

K Marshall introduced herself to the Governing Body.

She then gave an update to the Student Union and of ongoing work with the Head of Student Engagement to fill the vacant posts during the Autumn term (including the associated role of second student governor). She also detailed a communication questionnaire which had been shared with students and to which responses and possible solutions would be discussed at the Student Council meeting in November.

K Marshall also outlined AoC training for student leaders and staff and student governors which she was attending in November, which would be reported upon at the next meeting.

7. Corporate Update

7.1 Audit and Risk Recommendations

R Anderson gave a brief appraisal of the September meeting in which the new Internal Auditors (WBG) were formally introduced with their internal audit plan discussed, amended and approved subject to the adjustments.

She also highlighted: a fruitful discussion with risk management on cyber security and AI and of ongoing assurances including bringing forward an audit on AI into the current year; discussion on the exemplar audit assurance framework shared by RSM where it was agreed a pilot on a small section of the risk register would be completed to assess the cost/benefit of the considerable additional work should this be fully rolled out; and finally full consideration of the Post 16 assurance review report with some positive discussion on the robust nature of the report and of positive assurances on a number of issues being shared.

The following recommendations were then **approved** by the Governing Body:

- The 2024-2025 Regularity Audit Self Assessment Questionnaire
- The outcome of the 2024-2025 Performance Indicators for the Internal Auditor (RSM) received for information
- The outcome of the 2024-2025 Performance Indicators for the Financial Statement/Regularity Auditor (Forvis Mazars) received for information
- Confirmation of the re-appointment of the Financial Statements/Regularity Auditor (Forvis Mazars) for a period of 1 year commencing 1 August 2025
- The 2025-2026 Performance Indicators for the new Internal Auditor (WBG)
- The 2025-2026 Performance Indicators for the Financial Statements/Regularity Auditor (Forvis Mazars)

7.2 Management Accounts (July 2025)

Z Lewis updated Governors on the final outturn for the July management accounts (£66K) and reminded them of the variances and reasons from the original surplus (£0.5m) which had transpired throughout the year. She confirmed 'Good' Financial Health for the year, and the expectations for this being 'Outstanding' for next year.

Governors noted the considerable work over the year to stabilize the financial position after hearing mid year that the 50% 16-18 growth funding would not be fully forthcoming.

7.3 Health and Safety Annual Report 2024-2025

S Marshall detailed a challenging year regarding Health and Safety, noting that whilst the College was now in a much better position, the risk would not be dropped until a further audit had taken place.

Governors sought clarification on the accident score which had doubled with severity of accident being a key factor; and in relation to the staff turnover rate where it was confirmed that the rate was high due to the low team number (3 in the team).

More generally, it was noted that this report (and the work over the year by the team led by S Marshall) gave positive reassurance on the College's approach to health and safety matters.

S Marshall then gave a brief overview of term 1 drawing attention to: 2 lost time injuries, 0 riddor incidents and 71 accidents- 50% of which were minor within Hair and Beauty. She confirmed that Health and Beauty had been invited to the next Health and Safety Committee meeting.

She also gave an update regarding the recent car accident outside STEM and an update on fire alarm activations/drills, all of which would be completed by half term (4 having already taken place).

7.4 Subcontractor Update

G Potts gave an overview of the year for subcontractors, which had ended positively. He also confirmed that no further partnership would continue with RelyOn Nutec, as detailed in his report.

He then outlined a good start to the new academic year and detailed a small restructuring exercise for the team which would better support bootcamp subcontracting.

Clarification was given in respect of over delivery from Hope Foundation.

8. Governance Update

8.1 Search and Governance Recommendations

The following recommendations were **approved** by the Governing Body:

- Appointment of Sharon Lane (as Chair of Employer Voice and Engagement) to the Search and Governance Committee
- Appointment of Katie Marshall to Student Governor from 22 October 2025 until 31 July 2026
- Appointment of Rachel Anderson to the Remuneration Committee with immediate effect and confirmation of membership of the Search and Governance Committee (as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee)
- The Governance Self Assessment Areas for Improvement 2024-2025 (subject to the final approval at the Governing Body meeting of 17 December 2025, within the Governance Self Assessment Report (SAR).
- The draft Governance Self Assessment Areas for Improvement 2025-2026
- External Governance Review updated fees as detailed below:

Overall fees	AoC fee (+ VAT)	Shirley fee (+ expenses 45ppm)
£6,300	£1,500	£4,500
Additional meeting on 17 th March	No fee	£225
£600 Deliver key findings on 7 th May	£150	£450
Total	£1,650	£5,175

- The following Governance Documents and Procedures
 - Standing Orders
 - Access to Meetings Procedures
 - Governing Body GDPR Privacy Notice
- Confirmation of adherence to Code of Governance (as per the mapping exercise approved by the Search and Governance Committee)

8.2 Governance Report

Z Foster presented her report, drawing particular attention to the SAR Validation day on 4 November, mandatory training, Governor walkthroughs and the annual invite to the Audit and Risk Committee's December meeting to hear the External Auditor's report on the Financial Statements.

Formal **approval** was given in respect of confirmation of the Public Interest Disclosure Notice for 2024-2025.

8.3 Freedom of Information Summary 2024-2025

M Wilson detailed the summary for the Governing Body which was formally acknowledged.

8.4 Complaints Summary 2024-2025

O Rodley presented the Complaints summary for 2024-2025, in which overall numbers had increased, albeit without any specific themes or areas of concern. He also informed Governors of the change in lead to A Pajura-Jaszczak, after the retirement of P Stone.

Discussion and questions included: the risk of the use of AI for the complaints process; the process for appeals and related impartiality of those involved at each stage; and the use of external advice as appropriate within the complaint process.

Governors also asked for a gender split, if available, within the complaints report and it was agreed that this would be sought, if possible, for 2024-2025 but certainly would be place for future reporting to be actioned by A Pajura-Jaszczak.

Governors felt the report showed a balanced approach to the systems and processes, as exemplified with the number of complaints being partially or fully upheld and attended too.

9. Policies and Procedures

9.1 Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

M Wilson detailed the background to the annual statement which was required to ensure compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. He confirmed that the statement outlined the College's commitment to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking within its operations and supply chains for the financial year 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

The Governing Body **approved** the statement and its subsequent publication as required.

10. Review of Strategic Risks – verbal

The strategic risks were discussed in full again with the following of particular note:

- Confirmation that Staff recruitment and retention risk was currently being managed well
- External policy risk – notably the related rapid change including Ofsted and Qualifications Reform
- AI being likely to feature explicitly as a risk in the next iteration of the registers
- Rises in student mental health (with expectations that figures would continue to rise), albeit acknowledging that there were very strong processes and support in place led by A Adamson and her teams
- Teacher Workload and the creation of a Teacher Workload Group which had raised the additional pastoral needs of students and the impact of that
- The costs associated with increased student numbers including lagged funding, space issues and recruitment of teachers and the variety of approaches used by the College dependent upon the department
- The new area of Inclusion within the Ofsted Framework and preparatory work on that emerging requirement

11. Date and Time of Meetings/Activities for Term 1 2025-2026

- Governing Body SAR s – Tuesday 4 November 2025 10-3pm
- Invite to 1st item of Audit and Risk Committee on Thursday 11 December 2025 at 1pm (to hear the External Auditor Report)
- Governing Body (Ordinary) – Wednesday 17 December 2025 5-8pm

12. Matters Not for Publication

None recorded.

13. Any other Business

- a) Feedback on presentation from SLT – governors found the presentation at the start useful in framing the meeting. It was confirmed that the presentation would be shared post meeting with all governors (including those unable to attend).

Officers (except for K Parkinson, Z Foster and Z Lewis), and Staff and Student Governors left the meeting ahead of the final item below:

14. Reserved Matters

14.1 – Termination Payments 2024-2025

K Parkinson took the Governing Body through the annual (anonymized) paper which included above statutory contract payments, as statutorily required.

Governors sought clarification on two instances of redundancy. Governors then confirmed the special payments for 2024-2025.

The meeting ended at 7.24pm