

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE  
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING 17.12.2025**

**PRESENT:** L Woods (CG/Chair), J Castor (CG), G Dobson (CG), E-G Farndale (Student Governor), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), D Lusardi (CG) from 5.22pm, K Marshall (Student Governor), S Mirsalehi (CG) from 5.30pm, P Neal (CG), A Shaffi (CG), P Sharp (CG), D Still (Staff Gov), J Tait (CG), I Wallace (CG).

**VIA TEAMS:** R Anderson (CG), M Gaze (CG), P Lynn (CG), M McClintock (CG)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** A Adebola (Student Union Vice President)

**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), C Whitehead (VP).

**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), H Day (CG), A Pajura-Jaszczak (Staff Gov), M Wells (CG).

L Woods extended a welcome to Emily Grace Farndale and Ayodamola Adebola (*in roles as outlined within 3.1 below*)

**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 Appointment of Student Governor**

The Governing Body formally **approved** the appointment of:

- Emily-Grace Farndale as second Student Governor as a result of the Student Union elective process on a term of office from 17 December 2025 until 31 July 2027 (subject to progression through her studies)
- In addition, and in keeping with practice over the past two years, the Governing Body also **approved** the addition of Ayodamola (Damola) Adebola to operate in an informal capacity to support Student Voice on the Governing Body until 31 July 2026.

**3.2 Unconfirmed Minutes of 22 October 2025** – approved as a correct record

**3.3 Unconfirmed Minutes of 04 November 2025 (SAR Validation)** - approved as a correct record

**3.4 Confirmation of Written Resolution**

- **TTE PCSA Approval** – the resolution was formally confirmed.

**4. Matters Arising** – all would be attended to as per the time frame (and by the relevant committee) outlined within the document. There were no other outstanding matters arising.

**5. Strategic Overview**

**5.1 SLT Update (presentation)**

Our Partners – Z Lewis gave an overview of the key areas including:

- Rising youth unemployment and the DWP's plans to invest in youth schemes
- The cancellation of Eton Middlesbrough and communication with Eton re possible partner work
- An expectation that strong accountability measures would be coming through
- Capital capacity funding which was going to TVCA (and which was not currently in the plan)
- A number of external visitors to the College including: DfE director, Ofqual, Skills England, MBC, Bishop breakfasts (which would be regularly scheduled), careers leads from across Teesside, and Deputy Lieutenants. Z Lewis informed the Board that some of its governors from the Employer Voice Committee would be meeting Skills England in January when they visited
- An update on the Strategic Planning consultation, which was going well, and which would help inform priority discussions at the February workshops

Our Resilience – C Whitehead gave some headline updates relating to Finance, notably:

- A forecasting surplus of £3.6m against a budget of £1.6m and reasons for this (unbudgeted additional Bootcamp funding, unutilized contingency, 16-18 in-year growth, albeit unconfirmed by DfE) which would allow the opportunity to expedite cash days and allow for future investment opportunities, which would be brought to the February Strategic planning residential
- That both the Statutory Financial Accounts and Management Accounts had been successfully completed earlier than in previous years
- An update relating to Power BI reporting system

Governors questioned whether the reporting system issues were now resolved with confirmation that reports could be run, and although work with IT was ongoing to develop this, reporting would not present a risk.

Campus and Digital – S Marshall gave a comprehensive update confirming:

- a decrease in energy usage and total emissions reduction of 24% from 2024-2025
- an update on work on the TTE mezzanine and negotiations with MBC, and final design planning ahead of tender preparations
- positive feedback on the recent Health and Safety competency audit (with the full audit report to follow for Audit and Risk at its next meeting)
- an update on Salix and GB energy projects which were on track and would include some complex work particularly during the summer 2026
- Audit and Risk Committee assurances via a comprehensive cyber security report at its 11 December meeting (which could be shared with interested governors)
- Estate efficiency work which would be shared as part of the February workshops

It was confirmed that the TTE mezzanine work was on budget.

Our Team – K Parkinson drew out some key highlights including:

- A slightly lower staff turnover rate from last year at 4.4%, noting a positive turnover for lecturers, but a higher turnover for teaching support staff
- 2% sickness rate which was low for the sector with some attribution of this to the flexible working provision
- Ongoing positive Union relationships with JCNC, notable at a time when several colleges were in dispute
- HR plans for 2026 including – system development, workforce development and IIP journey to platinum status
- Finally, K Parkinson detailed some end-of-term activities for staff and their families (Christmas party).

Governors questions centred around turnover including: whether teacher support turnover was confined to particular areas with detail around Learning Support Assistants and long term sickness issues which accounted for much of the increase; whether the improvement for lecturer turnover was due to better recruitment or better retention with confirmation that this was a mixture of both; though it was noted the pool of candidates were generally better qualified than in post-Covid where turnover was especially high, but also that it still remained an issue for those hard to recruit areas.

The questions led onto a discussion on the various factors impacting retention stability for the College (both positive and negative) and that the wider FE sector pressures on budget and need to increase staff numbers would make this an ongoing risk to manage. Secondary school budgetary pressures were detailed which could potentially release another avenue of qualified candidates.

Our Community – A Adamson gave a comprehensive account of participation, development and inclusion activity and developments including:

- Persistent absence of 22.96%, down on 1.18% on last year, which was a positive step
- Overall attendance being in line with last year and greater detail in relation to data developments with Redcar LA on attendance improvements (which showed that 4/5 of students had better attendance) and of ongoing work with other LAs to produce similar data sharing
- Praise and Reward schemes and increases in commendations for students
- Good progress in relation to work placements
- Worldskills – a full account of three learners who were in the national Finals for WorldSkills UK with one gold and one silver award, and Health and Social Care being in the North East Hub for WorldSkills for Health, all of which were fabulous achievements
- Inclusion developments including a defined strategy (which would be shared in February), alongside KPIs, dashboard and training (which had been detailed and discussed in full at the recent Curriculum and Standards meeting)
- Several great social action projects being undertaken by students this term

Action by A Adamson and P Neal to liaise re possible involvement in work with the Henry Smith Foundation on attendance early in 2026 for Redcar and Cleveland area.

Our Commitment – G Potts updated governors on Wave 2 of Technical Excellence Colleges and of possible options within the Tees Valley area which was due to be discussed by the Tees Valley colleges tomorrow, although it was likely that any bid (the deadline of which was 16 February) would be extended to cover the wider North East.

Governors discussed the opportunity in some detail including process, delivery plans, and stakeholder involvement.

G Potts also gave an update on some EPNE funded activity with 2.5FTE for construction technology funded until the end of March 2026.

More generally, he detailed:

- Apprenticeship recruitment figures (99% of Q1 target) and 26% year on year growth
- Work experience – with an update on successful placements and need for additional placements with more tier 1 learners; and of the flexibilities now afforded with employer led projects for T Levels (leading to the advertisement of project coordinator roles) involving a number of local employers such as Thirteen and AV Dawson.
- Success with the scholarship programme with 79 students involved
- Employer advisory boards and events update and a positive employer feedback activity

Governors' questions and discussion focused on apprenticeship recruitment both within College (which was improving) and within the wider Tees Valley in which there had been a decline; and whether there may be a future issue with growth. It was acknowledged that as apprenticeships were growing in the highest value areas this could put future strain on specialist space areas – one of the issues to be considered at the Strategic Planning residential.

Action by P Neal to share contact details with B Robinson of Tees Valley Anchor Network who were doing some related work.

Our Ambition – B Robinson outlined the curriculum alignment activity for Governors drawing particular attention to:

- Detail of alignment of curriculum with national and regional priorities (with focus on key sectors such as Clean Energy) and the penalties should colleges not successfully do this
- Strong strategic partnerships and industry standard facilities enhancing skill development in emerging technologies and sustainability
- Active employer engagement to shape curriculum design and apprenticeship growth particularly within Engineering and Construction
- Addressing challenges and inclusivity with focused initiatives to improve work placements, inclusivity and detailed destination tracking to meet regulatory standards

He then also gave an update in respect of teaching and training confirming that teaching and assessment was more consistently strong; detailing real progress and innovation within professional development for teaching staff both within and outwith College; and focused improvement initiatives covering a range of activities including a professional development day on learning behaviours and digital upskilling.

Governors asked how distance travelled was mapped in relation to improvements/ensuring consistency particularly in weaker areas, with a number of avenues outlined including: through modelling of professional development; Department QiPs; dashboards; teacher progress all feeding into KPIs and progress measures, which was triangulated through QDP surveys and outcomes.

J Tait shared a very positive recent walkthrough (with C Duggan) where he talked to students in a number of different classrooms, noting the strength of relationships as a common theme, and which gave further monitoring assurances.

## **5.2 Strategic Risks Report**

Z Lewis confirmed a very good start to the academic year with positive enrolment and quality measures at this early point. She detailed the remaining one red risk – recruitment and retention.

Questions and discussion included: where the key areas of concern were for recruitment and retention with this being confirmed as learning support assistants and the hard to recruit areas of Construction, Engineering and Digital, and Health. Furthermore, while MC6 benchmarked well against other general FE colleges for salaries this was less positive compared to Sixth Form colleges. However, it was noted that with a strong budgetary position there was the headroom to manage risks and recompense staff with further discussion due at the strategic planning residential on options.

In addition, discussion included: the likely removal of Eton College from the register once absolutely confirmed; and consideration of AI as a risk in respect of destinations for students, with the high return rate of graduates to Masters programmes, in part due to an inability to secure graduate jobs, and a wider 12% drop in jobs for young people in

a market where there was a 64% increase in applications for jobs, further compounding the risk of further growth in NEET figures.

### 5.3 Principal/Chief Executive's Report

Z Lewis briefly addressed her report, particularly in respect of policy change, which had been addressed in detail within the SLT introductory item.

### 5.4 Strategic Plan including Corporate KPI Update

O Rodley confirmed that the majority of the KPIs were on target. He confirmed that there would be greater detail on student destinations at AP2 in January with ongoing work to capture destinations still taking place.

### 5.5 Accountability Statement Update

O Rodley detailed a generally positive picture at this stage and drew attention to the amber areas which were also close to being on target (including T Level students of over 700, currently at 697).

### 5.6 Annual Report 2024-2025

The Governing Body gave formal **approval** for the annual report 2024-2025 and its publication. Governors noted the improved graphics for this year's report.

### 5.7 Formal Approval of SAR 2024-2025 and QiP 2025-2026

O Rodley confirmed that all amendments suggested at the SAR Validation session in November had been applied to the document presented for approval within the papers. The Governing Body then **approved** the SAR 2024-2025 and QiP 2025-2026.

O Rodley clarified publication of the document confirming publication on the College's portal and that this was usually shared with Ofsted and DfE as appropriate (though this was not a formal obligation).

## 6. Corporate Update

### 6.1 Update on Budget and 5 Year Plan

C Whitehead gave the key highlights to the budget plan and outlined the reasoning behind the final cash position. She then detailed the forecast of £3.6m for the forthcoming year, and whilst caveating the position in respect of capital grants, in year growth and the ability of the DfE to fully fund that growth, showed a good and improving financial position for the College.

### 6.2 Financial Statements 2024-2025

C Whitehead gave an overview of the financial statements and detailed considerations by both Corporate Services and Audit and Risk Committees. An unqualified opinion was expected and no changes to the statements anticipated. She outlined the plan to remove dormant companies over 2026, detailing some complications in relation to Gift Aid. Finally, she drew attention to the early completion of the Financial Statements audit this year which had been pleasing.

Governors questioned how the audit had been completed much earlier with a number of reasons outlined including improved working between the auditors and staff over time and the additional senior finance role since last year.

After consideration, the Governing Body agreed to **approve** for signing by L Woods and Z Lewis all five sets of financial statements for the year ending 31 July 2025 as outlined below, and as also recommended at 6.4, (subject to no further material changes arising from audit and tax work)

- 6.2.1 Middlesbrough College
- 6.2.2 Northern Skills Group Business Services Ltd
- 6.2.3 Northern Apprenticeship Company Ltd
- 6.2.4 TTE Technical (UK) Ltd
- 6.2.5 TTE International Ltd

### 6.3 Corporate Services Recommendations from the meeting of 3 December 2025

J Castor gave a brief appraisal of the December meeting as outlined within the Recommendations sheet drawing particular attention to the SAR review of corporate services departments via a summary document and discussion which had worked notably better than the presentation led review last year; and approval of the publication of Greener Future and SECR 2024-2025 reports which she recommended Governors read.

The Governing Body then **approved** that the bad debts in excess of £1000 of **£33,712** (which combined £22,727 for 2024-2025 and two additional debts from 2022-23 and 2023—2024 of £10,985) be written off.

#### **6.4 Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations from the meeting of 11 December 2025**

R Anderson highlighted the smooth Financial Statements audit and gave thanks to both the Finance Team and auditors for this. She then detailed the number of recommendations for the Governing Body as detailed in the papers and below for approval:

After consideration, the Governing Body **approved** the following:

- The full set of financial statements as outlined and approved at *items 6.2*
- The 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee which included:
  - The 2025-2026 Internal Audit Plan
  - Committee Terms of Reference
  - 2024-2025 Internal Audit Annual Report
  - 2024-2025 Audit Findings Management letter (item)
  - 2024-2025 Risk Management Annual Report

Governors were reminded that the report would go to the DfE alongside the financial statements as per the regulatory processes.

#### **6.5 Management Accounts (October 2025)**

The Management Accounts for October 2025 were received.

#### **6.6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024-2025**

K Parkinson presented the annual EDI report outlining the changes to both format and presentation which Governors found much easier to read than in previous years.

The Governing Body **approved** the annual report for publication.

#### **6.7 Subcontractors Update**

G Potts gave an update in respect of the closure of Hope Foundation which had now ceased trading, detailing the transition plan for remaining learners to complete their courses on the College site, thereby safeguarding learner outcomes. He confirmed that the contingency plan had worked well with disruption minimized.

Clarification was given regarding the situation with Bootcamps and gap between 1 April and end of July, and of the greater flexibilities thereafter with TVCA and related grant funding plans (which were going to Cabinet this week).

Governors asked about any impact of the closure of Hope Foundation with G Potts confirming that those students who were near the end of their courses were able to complete, and an outstanding 30 learners who would study at the College and be supported with new staff in 2026 (and for whom there would be some disruption); the profile of the Hope learners was discussed with confirmation that due to the complex needs, provision would be at 2QS not the main College site; and an overview of the comprehensive discussion by Audit and Risk Committee was detailed.

The Governing Body acknowledged the sad closure of the Hope Foundation and its good work with hard to reach learners over the past 20-30 years.

### **7. Student Experience**

**7.1 Curriculum and Standards Committee meeting of 2 December 2025** – P Lynn gave a verbal account of the meeting including: full consideration of the closure of Hope Foundation; the loss of two members of the Committee (A Hassack and C Cannon); the new Ofsted Framework, in particular the increase in grades and potential difficulty in reaching the top grade; and change management of the meetings in light of Ofsted expectations and considerations by the Committee over the past year with early feedback indicating that discussions were improved, with ongoing monitoring/end of year review of the cycle; and presentations agreed for the next meeting which would now focus on a more thematic approach than in previous years (which had concentrated on areas needing support) with the March meeting focusing on Inclusion and NEETs provision.

**7.2 Higher Education Committee meeting of 25 November 2025** – M McClintock referenced the detailed account of the meeting within the pack for Governors and drew attention to: an engaging group of student representatives who gave a considered and lively contribution within the first half of the meeting; improved recruitment for HE; and the longer term planning focus for the Committee and work with the Academic Board and SLT on Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) over the next six months, which would come to the Governing Body in due course.

**7.3 QiP Update** – O Rodley outlined the progress against the key priorities for the year.

#### **7.4 Safeguarding Update**

A Adamson outlined the key changes to the Ofsted framework when considering safeguarding i.e. 'has met' or 'has not met' the standard and that the College considered it was meeting those standards.

She noted the suggestions for improvements from governors ahead of the meeting to the reporting which would be implemented for the next report in March.

Clarification in relation to a gun incident was given, with confirmation that this had occurred outside of the College.

#### **7.5 Written Update – Student Voice and Student Union Activity Update**

K Marshall referenced the large number of events which had been undertaken over the term. She also drew particular attention to the election of the two new Vice Presidents (Emily-Grace Farndale and Ayodamola Adebola), and a successful first Cross College meeting.

Student Union activity for 2024-2025 as outlined within Appendix 1 was **approved** by the Governing Body.

### **8. Governance Update**

#### **8.1 Student and Staff Governors Presentation from AoC Staff and Student Governor November Summit**

K Marshall gave a full presentation of the November summit, which had included the second day of the AoC conference including some student-specific breakout sessions; and of the first day of the Student Leadership Programme, all of which had given an enriching experience resulting in a great group of networks.

Governors gave thanks for an excellent presentation.

#### **8.2 Governance Update**

Z Foster gave a brief overview of her report. M Gaze detailed an impressive and enjoyable walkthrough of good quality and gave thanks to the team for facilitating the activity (which all governors were encouraged to do).

##### **8.2.1 Governance Self-Assessment 2024-2025 (including Areas for Improvement for 2025-2026)**

The overall grade of **'good'** and the wider governance self-assessment report was **approved** by the Governing Body. As part of the approval, the Areas for Improvement for 2025-2026 were also **agreed**.

### **9. Policies and Procedures**

#### **9.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Policy**

#### **9.2 Whistleblowing Policy**

#### **9.3 Subcontracting Fees and Charges Policy**

#### **9.4 Data Protection Policy**

Within 9.1 (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement and Policy), some recommendations for adjustment from a governor not able to be present at the meeting would be incorporated ahead of finalizing. Subject to those adjustments for 9.1, the four policies detailed above were **approved** by the Governing Body.

### **10. Review of Strategic Risks – verbal**

The strategic risks were discussed in full again with Governors in agreement these remained as was, but to additionally consider the student destinations discussion in relation to AI.

### **11. Date and Time of Meetings/Activities for Spring Term 2026**

- Governing Body Strategic Planning Residential – Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026 (all day) and Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026 until 12 noon (Redworth Hall)
- Governing Body (Ordinary) – Tuesday 31 March 2026 5-8pm

### **12. Matters Not for Publication**

None recorded.

### **13. Any other Business**

None taken.

*Officers (except Z Foster), and Staff and Student Governors left the meeting ahead of the final item below with business ending at 7.06pm*

#### 14. Reserved Matters (Confidential)

##### 14.1 – Remuneration Committee Recommendations from 16 December 2025

S Mirsalehi reported confidentially on the annual recommendations, noting that this was the first year that two additional senior postholders had been included.

*Z Foster left the meeting in respect of recommendations relating to her.*

College Governors considered the following recommendations:

- the Principal/Chief Executive's 2024-2025 Staff Appraisal and Pay Recommendations
- the Principal/Chief Executive's 2025-2026 Objectives
- the Vice Principal Business Innovation and Partnerships Pay Recommendations
- the Deputy Principal/Chief Executive's 2024-2025 Pay Recommendations
- the Head of Governance's 2024-2025 Staff Appraisal, and Pay Recommendations
- the Head of Governance's 2025-2026 Objectives
- Adherence to the AoC Remuneration Code by the Committee during 2024-2025
- Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee

After discussion, College Governors **agreed** that a written resolution be shared detailing further information as per the confidential discussion.

##### **POST MEETING NOTE:**

The Written Resolution shared with eligible governors on 18 December 2025 was approved on Friday 19 December 2025 with a 65% return by the deadline (and beyond the deadline of a final approval of 76%).

*The meeting ended at 8.30pm*