THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING – 24.03.2026

PRESENT: P Lynn (CG and Chair), H Day (CG), M Gaze (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), R Nighoskar (CO), D Still (Staff Governor), A Shaffi (CG), **J** Tait (CG), and L Woods (CG).

OFFICERS: A Adamson (VP), J Barwell (AP), P Blewitt (AP), J Chance (Group Dir. TLA), C Duggan (AD), Z Foster (Head of Governance), R Gray (AP), L McKenna (Director of HE), G Potts (VP), O Rodley (VP), P Watt (AP), C Yule (AD).

IN ATTENDANCE: S Collier (AoC External Governance Reviewer) observing the meeting via Teams

IN ATTENDANCE FOR RELEVANT ITEM:
K Tait (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**
S Lane (CO) (retrospectively noted).

S Collier, External Board Reviewer was welcomed to the meeting as an observer (via Teams) with full introductions given by Committee members and staff present.

2. **Declarations of Interest** – no declarations.

3. **Minutes of Meeting of 02.12.2025** were approved as a correct record.

4. **Matters Arising** – no matters outstanding.

Items 5 and 6 were switched so the Principal's update was taken first for context)

5. **Principal/CEO Verbal Overview and Risk Summary**
Z Lewis drew attention to key areas which the Committee may wish to consider over the meeting:
- A generally positive position overall
- AP2 has shown more amber / red to which questions might be directed. She drew particular attention to Maths GCSE and reminded Committee that this had reduced from 4 hours pw teaching to 3 this year.

She confirmed that more analysis was taking place at Level 1 with the higher volumes and resulting challenges which may lead to greater investment around staff and welfare roles (with consideration at Corporate Services Committee).

6. **Presentations**
P Lynn outlined the reasoning behind the presentations chosen (originally Inclusion and Roots) and then of the change from Roots to Social Care, notably that Roots had some considered discussion at the recent Strategic Planning residential and Social Care had shown some in-year quality concern issues at AP2 which it would be useful for the Committee to be appraised of. Helpfully, there was also a report on the Roots provision within the papers for completeness.

Inclusion
A Adamson gave a comprehensive account of how the Inclusion Strategy had been developed and a reminder that this was ostensibly for students, albeit in line with the Ofsted Framework and SEN White Paper.

She detailed the key aspects of the Strategy namely: wider context, local context, identification of barriers to learning and wellbeing, implementing support, staff eco-system, training and support, monitoring and review of the strategy and the action plan.

The specifics in relation to the local context, which was complex in nature and the impact for learners, within the key areas of economic disadvantage, SEND, social care and vulnerability, youth justice, safeguarding and mental health and academic needs, were detailed fully, alongside the need to identify those barriers early (and how the College was doing this).

SEN reform through the white paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' was outlined notably the three tier SEND model and associated support, expectations, and investment, and how this translated into the work the College needed to do.

The graduated approach of the SEND reform was detailed, noting that learners could move both up and down the levels as needs changed, alongside the graduated approach to Safeguarding and Wellbeing Support within the College.

A recent 'strong standard' outcome from an FE College Ofsted inspection was outlined, followed by the College KPIs in this area which showed good performance, albeit participation was a focus for the disadvantaged alongside L2 English and Maths learners. Confirmation was given on the regular monitoring of progress at each assessment point (AP) stage.

Finally, A Adamson, detailed the key priorities for 2025-2026 under the three umbrella headings of Identify; Implement and Monitor and of progress within so far including work with schools and LAs, training and support for staff and monitoring.

<u>Governors discussion and questions included</u>: Confirmation that destinations was within the KPIs; how Governors could determine whether the strategy was a good one with discussion on collaboration with others (especially those who had been inspected), termly reports to the Committee and regular review and adaptation over the strategy particularly as the context shifted; how the College ensured employers accept young people with these range of issues with discussion on the partner work with employers including training for current employees who had some of those challenges, education on inclusivity and Advisory Board discussions; case sampling work within College including learners within multiple categories; and an update on how the College was doing in terms of base line national comparisons with a discussion on the development of Inspection Data Summary reports (IDSR) for colleges, reducing the gaps between learners with disadvantage and their peers and related high expectations on learners from year 1.

Governors noted the visual of the strategy on page 2, and the Committee ***agreed*** to recommend the Strategy to the Governing Body at its 31 March meeting.

<u>*Action by O Rodley and A Adamson*</u> to bring the Inclusion dashboard to the next meeting.

Thanks was given to A Adamson.

Social Care
J Barwell and K Tate gave a comprehensive presentation on the Social Care department detailing:

- Key areas for improvement aligned to the SAR and progress (with 2 on track, 3 progressing and 1 declining – this being progress in maths)
- Progress in relation to attendance was detailed which was similar to last year overall. However, there had been an improvement in persistent absentees on last year, within a learner driven focus /ownership approach. An outline of the tracking and monitoring of attendance was shared with the Committee
- In year emerging issues: staff stability, particularly in relation to a condensed period of absences which had a significant impact; teaching and learning (specifically preparing for curriculum changes); maths progress and Level 1 (impacted by staff stability in term 1), particularly the high dropout rate
- Progress and impact on the in-year emerging issues was fully detailed
- Future plans were then outlined notably preparing for changes to the planned curriculum; adaption of TLA approaches for the Level 1 programme; continuation of leading curriculum reform within Social Care; restructure of personal development lead to CTL; and training needs to support staff with an inclusive curriculum
- Positive impact of changes in the curriculum such as taking the academic specific skills first for Level 3 year 1 and resulting assessments

<u>Governors questions and discussion included</u>: any trends with absence noting that those with more general barriers to learning were most affected, with a direct effect also as a result of staff absence in some cases; the use of good teacher role models both for CPD and within lessons to support less experienced staff; support for learners who drop out and associated retention figures; curriculum reform and fewer options for students who were struggling; case sampling within Social Care; and staff morale and support mechanisms in place within the small team.

The Committee thanked K Tait and J Barwell for their update.

7. QIP/Development Plan Update
O Rodley gave an update in respect of the QiP, noting progress within the 5 priority areas. Some time was spent on Persistent Absence which was increasing with greater detail being shared on lower level learners.

<u>Governors' questions and discussion included:</u> the mix of progress within A Levels and Applied General where in some cases improvements were not as hoped within the early mocks (with more clarification/update available after this week's March mocks); the accuracy/confidence/caution of staff predictions at A Level; communications with parents; learner destinations which were positive other than for adults; a full discussion on retention including: whether new staff leavers

were staying in the profession/sector (with confirmation this was the case for a number), that there was no clear trend for leaving within the exit surveys, the use of exit interviews (which were non obligatory), and whether the comprehensive support package for new teachers could be marketed more explicitly, and of the lower than average turnover rate (which would be vital in an increasingly competitive market over the next 3 years of demographic uplift); and safeguarding and persistent absence referrals to the LA and process and communication channels the College engaged with as part of this.

8. Contribution to meeting Skills Need

G Potts detailed a positive position as outlined within the Strategic Planning residential.

Governors noted exceptional progress in this area.

Questions included: whether additional money had been required for the two new roles with confirmation that these were planned investments which would support the additional flexibilities for industry placements; how destination data was being improved with increased granularity, notably through the new destinations dashboard; whether the challenge of getting the required higher number of work placements might impact on quality with acknowledgement that this may occur albeit all due diligence was completed fully alongside discussion at curriculum and quality meetings/new data dashboard; the ability of the College to adapt qualifications/pathways to suit the SME employers in the region and the mechanisms for feedback (including employer advisory boards/LSIP conversations); education of employers to support students in work placements; and the destinations dashboard and complications notably within Adults.

9. Curriculum, Teaching and Training

J Chance highlighted the number of governor walkthroughs which had taken place which staff had greatly valued.

A brief discussion took place in relation to staff absence, particularly within single subject areas.

9.1 16-19 Study Programme

P Watt presented his paper as read, highlighting updates within other items within the agenda.

A detailed discussion took place on the persistent absence rate, noting that fewer students had dropped out (and the profile of some of those students re inclusivity) but that statistically some of the students who had not dropped out had lower attendance thereby impacting figures, and the absence process and cut off points (which was generally 4 weeks) and related monitoring.

Further questions and discussion centred around: value added progress/high grades and interventions and actions to improve this; balance of supporting the various cohorts of learners equally particularly within the wide range of prior attainment within the provisions (with a considerable range noted in A Levels) and impact of high levels of part time work for students; adaptive learning for Maths and English variances; confirmation of pedagogical approach to teach to the top and examples of what this looked like in action; and the value of teaching staff being external examiners.

L McKenna left the meeting at 4.05pm

9.1.1 ROOTs Provision

R Gray gave a brief reminder of the purpose and cohort of Roots provision, detailing some additional outreach work which the College was now engaged as part of the wider NEETs prevention strategy for the local area.

Questions included: the impact on the wider College attendance of the Roots learners' attendance as the provision grows with detail of monitoring and progress given; and how the College kept learners engaged for Maths and English beyond the 12 week programme with acknowledgement this had been more difficult pre-Christmas.

9.2 Adult Learning Programmes

R Gray gave a brief update to her report, noting a decline in destinations overall which would remain a focus going forward, that retention rates for ESOL remained strong and that collaboration with TVCA and DWP were also strong.

Governor discussion and questions included: the level that Power BI went to (learner level) with an example of this in action in respect of work with Thirteen Housing group; whether 180 for NEETs was an aspirational target with confirmation that this was likely achievable; the positive atmosphere of 2QS and of recent positive visits both by governors and DfE officials; how the College supported learners post qualification with their progression; and the new policy re auto enrolment to an FE college for school leavers (how this would look, implications on IAG, planning and impact on NEET numbers).

9.2.1 Subcontracting Update

G Potts and R Gray gave a comprehensive update in relation to subcontractors including: an update on outstanding learners as a result of the Hope closure; issues re contract values for Uplift and 3T; and support to subcontractors.

9.3 Apprenticeships

N Simpson noted a stable apprenticeship delivery which would perform broadly in line with the target at year end. He also highlighted a green return on the accountability framework across all measures. Quality Assurance was detailed with progress noted, and specific mention to a recent Engineering deep dive by a serving Ofsted Inspector which had been positive against the new framework. Also noted was the functional skills curriculum development with the English and Maths lead, and a good retention and attendance rate.

Questions and discussion included: numbers of completion past end date/leaving early with further work due on withdrawals and non-achievement including an at risk policy being brought in; low apprenticeship feedback and possible reasons why (noting that 2.5 was considered 'good' nationally) and the complications of the dynamic national dashboard and development of QDP so the College could gain more detailed information from its employer partners.

9.4 English and Maths

R Walsh presented his report as read and took questions.

The Committee discussed whether the College intended to reintroduce the extra hour (which had been previously subsidised by the DfE) with consideration of the impact of the reduction, government expectations, and wider sector practice; the greater difficulty of encouraging the use of Century Tech as part of independent learning by way of replacement; the continued value of Century Tech outwith class teaching and return on investment; range of support for students at L1 diagnostic stage; and the possible benefit of the new qualification for Maths and English at L1 due to be introduced.

9.5 Provision for Learners with High Needs

C Duggan added an update to his report in relation to the SEN White paper consultation, and communication and activity within the sector on aspects of this, acknowledging that it was generally going in the right direction of travel.

Governors had a discussion on consultation feedback including: potential of ISPs for 2000 learners and workload sustainability; need to standardise High Needs funding (with the College currently working with 8 LAs); variance of quality of information available from schools; concern on level of expectation to be placed on colleges; the high levels of FE support for High Needs students historically and lack of financial support and likely cost cutting exercise associated with the consultation.

R Walsh and N Simpson left at 4.40pm

10. Participation and Development

A Adamson gave a comprehensive overview of student engagement and enrichment.

Governors asked how the fair distribution of participation was ensured with confirmation on participation as part of the inclusion KPIs.

Governors also noted the recent involvement and achievement of past and present student governors in their participation activities which had been pleasing to see.

11. Initial Teacher Training

J Chance reminded the Committee of the imminent inspection for ITE, and of preparatory work for this (including a successful mock inspection in November 2025) and highlighted the recent involvement of Link Governors M Gaze and J Tait in walkthroughs and conferences respectively, both of which had been very welcome.

Governors briefly discussed the improvements within the department and wished the College well in the inspection when it took place.

12. Achievement

O Rodley outlined positive progress in relation to retention, learner progress at AP2, learner satisfaction and destination outcomes.

He detailed some emerging issues, notably attendance and persistent absence at Levels 1-2 and entry level; a fall in maths progress; value added scores for A Levels; High Needs learner destinations with an explanation that this may be a tracking anomaly rather than true NEET outcome; and adult destination decline.

Governors queried: whether some specific (sports) courses with the least progress had the same staff with confirmation that this was not always the case, with changes to academic support and curriculum intent to address this noted.

C Duggan left the meeting at 4.55pm

13. Committee Review of Top Risks

Top risks were confirmed as:

- Staffing
- Attendance
- Value Added (at top end)
- Outcomes of SEN white paper (which may result in greater risk)

Other areas:

- The link between all of the risks above – inclusivity, movement at the top end and staff work load and wellbeing was noted
- A Adamson gave an update in respect of international trips and visits with two visits now being re-routed to avoid Middle East conflict zones.

14. Agenda Planning

The following was ***agreed***:

- Dashboard presentation
- For the College team to advise after the Curriculum Performance Reviews, which departments it would be useful to see
- Social Care – a monitoring update

15. Dates of Meetings for 2025-2026

15.1 Tuesday 9 June 2026 at 3-7pm (Curriculum Planning)

P Lynn encouraged attendance at the Curriculum Planning session on 9 June. She also reminded staff that it would be super if the department teams could hold to the time slots given to ensure a fair allotment of time for all.

15.2 Tuesday 30 June 2026 at 2pm

16. Any Other Business

16.1 Basic Compliance Assessment letter for Student Sponsor Status noted for information

The meeting closed at 5.05pm