THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION – 07.10.2025

PRESENT: L Woods (CG/Chair), R Anderson (CG), I Anwar (CG), D Budd (CO), A Coleman-Cooke (CO), H Day (CG), G Dobson (CG), M Gaze (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), M McClintock (CG), S Mirsalehi (CG), R Nighoskar (CO), A Pajura-Jaszczak (Staff Gov), A Shaffi (CG), P Sharp (CG), D Still (Staff Gov), J Tait (CG), I Wallace (CG), M Wells (CG).

OFFICERS: A Adamson (VP), J Barwell (AP), P Blewitt (AP), Z Foster (Head of Governance), R Gray (AP), C Harrison (Exec. Assistant); S Marshall (VP), P Moody (Exec. Dir.), G Potts (VP), B Robinson (DP), O Rodley (VP), R Shuttleworth (Chief Technical Officer), P Watt (AP), C Whitehead (VP), M Wilson (Exec. Dir), C Yule (AP).

IN ATTENDANCE: Kate Lou – Partner at Pro Excellence Partnerships

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

1. Apologies for Absence
S Brown (CO), C Cannon (CO), J Castor (CG), R Davies (CO), A Hassack (CG), D Lusardi (CG), P Lynn (CG). (CG), M Londsdale-Marr (Student Governor), P Neal (CG), K Parkinson (VP), T Pierce (Group Dir.), and G Sutton (Student Governor).

2. Welcomes
L Woods, as the new Chair of the Governing Body welcomed everyone, particularly new Governors and Staff.

She highlighted the importance of both the development of the new Strategic Plan (starting at this meeting) and the External Governance Review this year which would assist the shaping of priorities for the Chair/Governing Body.

Z Lewis introduced K Lou to the meeting, detailing the role of Pro Excellence Partnerships in the Strategic Plan work.

3. **Declarations of Interest –** R Anderson in respect of any LSIP/LSIF related discussion.

4. Appointments
L Woods outlined the approvals for appointments to the Governing Body as detailed below:
- That Helen Day be appointed as a College Governor on a four year term as of 7 October 2025 and sits on the Curriculum and Standards Sub Committee
- That Riya Nighoskar be appointed as a Co-opted Governor on a four year term as of 7 October 2025 and sits on the Curriculum and Standards Sub Committee. Additionally, for Riya to join the College Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

All members present ***approved*** the two appointments

5. Strategic Updates
Z Lewis introduced the session. She drew attention to the many moving parts impacting the strategic plan work this side of Christmas, and of the general timeline for progress and completion.

Enrolment/Finance - C Whitehead gave an overview of the positive enrolment, particularly at 16-19, and Skills Bootcamps. She confirmed that growth in those areas had been slightly offset by the reduction in HE recruitment. Overall, however, the position was positive with £2.4million additional income to the approved July budget, bringing the College to over £70 million income for the first time.

She detailed the key budget lines, then highlighted the ongoing work by SLT assessing investment options versus expediting cash balance increases whilst considering future staff pay expectations.

The degree of certainty for the £2.4 million was questioned by Governors and it was confirmed some of the funds were relating to in-year growth (under lagged funding methodology) which is as yet unconfirmed Z Lewis reminded Governors of the unprecedented situation last year where 50% mid year lagged funding had not been fully realized, and the College's non-reliance on in-year funding in our budget going forward. Whilst the Government had assured colleges that money had been set aside, this still was caveated by affordability. £1.25K is the amount we expect with confirmation usually received around February (albeit this was later last year). As always, we will not make any significant future commitments until this funding is confirmed.

Campus – S Marshall gave an update to recent campus works including completion of the construction yard covered area and TTE modular buildings, Outwood site progress, and of the design work underway for the Salix project and GB Solar Accelerator project, in which MC had been the only successful college in the North East.

She gave an early alert to future decisions to be expected outwith the usual cycle of meetings (i.e. via Written Resolution) which were required to progress plans in relation to:
- Salix Tender Phase 1
- Deed of Variation with Middlesbrough Council to increase lease payments
- TTE mezzanine tender

Z Lewis highlighted the importance of the campus works as detailed which were addressing the issue of space (a major challenge for the College) and enabling £8M of sustainability investment to the site which would realize significant electricity savings over time.

Emerging Quality Priorities – B Robinson detailed the forming and aspirational quality priorities for the College for 2025-2026 which would likely be:
- Persistent absence (L2 and below)
- High grade attainment, particularly in relation to progress of learners with high prior attainment
- Learner destinations in the current climate of rising unemployment
- Recruitment and retention of staff, especially early career

He also reminded governors that Initial Teacher Education (ITE) was due inspection this academic year under the new Ofsted framework and the College's work to prepare over the coming months, including a mock inspection in November.

Governors questioned and discussed how large the issue was in relation to high grade attainment as value added was improved - with confirmation that this varied but was largely A Level provision based, with some variance in relation to gender. Contextual information was given i.e. that this potentially affected approximately 600 students out of our 5000 16-18 year olds.

Action by A Shaffi to visit the A Levels faculty.

Staff Survey – Z Lewis drew attention to a positive staff survey including: the return rate of 60%, that the College was above benchmarks in all areas, and in the upper quartile in five areas giving a joint best staff survey overall, and strong relative to the sector; key themes such as pay and benefits and the areas this affected more (e.g. A Levels where college staff are paid on average £15K less than Sixth Forms/schools) and what the College was doing to support staff e.g. training and development.

Industrial Relations – Z Lewis reminded governors of the recent Pay Award and further 1% given in August (4% overall from August 2025) resulting in the pay award having already been determined for 2025-2026 (with the movement of the future pay award to August in line with the sector). She then outlined wider sector negotiations in which the AoC had recommended 4% for 2025-2026 (subject to affordability) against UCU requesting 10% or £3000 minimum plus workload review and national bargaining, and of current industrial action affecting some 42 colleges.

The College plan going forward was to consider the financial position early in 2026 for August 2026 and to offer the best possible pay award for staff with Governors being heavily involved with the decision making.

It was confirmed that no pay award provision was in the current year's budget as this had already been determined but there were a number of options for consideration for the 2026-2027 award.

6. Strategic Planning

Z Lewis gave a brief overview to the current plan and Curriculum Intent document (in which there was some overlap), detailing the journey and four iterations of the Strategic Plan since 2012, including the College Mission, priorities and values.

7. SWOT/CMT Surveys/KPIs/ Self Assessment

A Adamson outlined the recent CMT self assessment against the strategic plan which showed a very positive picture across the strategic areas generally, albeit still 'in progress' within Our Team in relation to recruitment and retention.

KPIs were generally progressing well except in the QiP areas already detailed. Study programmes, adults, and apprenticeships were all green with good progress. HE recruitment at 92% of target was red (a 3 year downward trend which reflected the sector turn) and International/Commercial was orange with a general decline since Covid. Economic and Social were also green.

She gave further details in relation to areas of orange within Study programmes in relation to progress and destinations; within Adults destinations (and the complexities within this) and volumes; and for HE funding challenges, volume, decrease in student satisfaction, and focus on progress and destinations. Apprenticeships remained strong across all metrics.

The SLT Self Assessment, and SWOT and PESTLE analysis outcomes from the recent CMT shared as pre-reading were then used by Governor groups to consider the analyses themselves; whether anything was missing; whether RAG ratings were accurate; any alternative views; and thoughts on areas of strength and challenge.

Feedback included:
SLT Self Assessment: whether there was too much green – e.g. English basic skills; IoT not areas of green and how these were measured; the impact of the new inclusion inspection category and the need for the Board to have more detail on these areas going forward

SWOT Analysis: High Needs, whilst a strength, has complex and potentially unfavourable external factors impacting upon ite.g. white paper; marketing of overall learning outcomes as the College was one of the top performers in the North East; the strength of student satisfaction; Staff career planning weakness and developing leadership and management from within; potential opportunities relating to East Middlesbrough and the College's role; threats – health and safety with growth and increase in buildings and increased need for high quality staff; financial strength complexity with financial health due to be outstanding and plan for cash days; and possible re-consideration of 'threats' list as could also be considered opportunities.

PESTLE Analysis – agreement that this was an extensive list with some big issues; Mental Health was not explicitly within the analysis and should consider both staff and students; HE policy numbers and strategy; impact of government decisions such as the new data centre; and future potential of college mergers with new FE commissioner regime?

Beyond 2030
Z Lewis detailed the comprehensive Strategic Planning Process pre Christmas supported by Pro Excellence consultancy in key areas, which would pull together the outcomes from the commissioned work, consultations and external plans for the February Strategic Planning days with further work ready for a July sign off.

Further detail was given with respect to the commissioned work, including space analysis and what this entailed and how this could be used to support curriculum efficiencies.

R Anderson also gave further detail of LSIP V2 in respect of theme, timeline and joint ownership with TVCA.

K Lou then led a workshop for the Governors to consider who the plan was for, whether it could/should be used for all stakeholders/who was the most important; and whether the plan should be evolutionary or revolutionary in nature.

Feedback included: agreement that students were the heart of any strategy, that the strategy plan served a number of different stakeholders/purposes; and the importance of the plan for the Governing Body i.e. what was the Board holding the College accountable for and the overarching responsibility of the Governing Body for setting the strategy.

Feedback on the current plan included: that it had a stakeholder focus, agreement that students and potentially parents would be unlikely to look at this in detail; but that a future plan could be differentiated for the various stakeholders.

Evolution or Revolution feedback included: constraints from Government/policy which would make absolute revolution difficult; and support for some form of hybrid where there were aspects of revolution with new challenges and opportunities and some examples of this (staff career progression, AI; Salix project etc).

Context
Z Lewis gave a comprehensive overview of the national context in relation to political influences and the myriad of government strategies impacting Post 16 which involved a great deal of change (including budget related, Get Britain Working, Industrial Strategy, CAR, devolution, national Post 16 Strategy, Skills England, Growth and Skills Levy/Life Long learning and universities).

Z Lewis took the Governing Body through the increase in NEETs levels since 2021 and the possible trajectory going forward which was sharply increasing if it remained in line with demographics. Societal change impacts were also highlighted making for a complex landscape.

More regionally, attention was drawn to the low education levels in the Tees Valley, the fact that graduates left the area, low job density and a decrease in lower paid roles within the region. However, it was recognized that there was high ambition for the region and the local growth plan for TVCA was detailed.

Governors discussed the lack of entrepreneurial graduates, individuals and SMEs wanting to grow both regionally and nationally and the importance of the November budget.
Local Context was also discussed with positive partner relations and collaboration by the College being highlighted, alongside detail of the new LMI map which was being commissioned to further ensure the College offer was meeting local needs.

Future student numbers were detailed, including a greater MC share this year than anticipated, and how future numbers would impact the requirements for the campus going forward both in the immediate future and also beyond 2033 when demographics dipped. A reminder of the Digital strategy which supported increasing class sizes was also given.

Governors discussed the various elements of the Post 16 strategy and their potential influence on the College strategy.

A workshop followed which asked governor groups to consider the College's next potential investment options divided into four areas of destinations, support, workforce and capacity, alongside consideration of increasing cash days sooner and the pros and cons of the investment options.

8. Alternative Plans

A workshop activity, led by G Potts, took place which considered a variety of alternative strategic plans particularly in relation to aesthetics, images, tone of messaging, SMART objectives and ease of navigation.

After consideration, feedback in respect of the future plan included: the importance of values and early placement in the strategic document; a joint introductory statement from the Chair and CEO; relevant photos; consideration of the target audience and purpose (and whether there should be more than one document); and inclusion of TVCA's 10 year growth plan.

9. Values

O Rodley outlined the work by CMT which detailed the perceived impact of the current values and the general view that there should be fewer than the 7 in use.

Governors discussed what the most important 5 values would be, with individual preferences input into a Mentimeter and compared with the CMT version where there were some areas of commonality around ambition, inclusivity and support.

I Anwar and C Whitehead left the meeting at 4.30pm

Next Steps

Clarification was given on the next steps of the developmental work:

- Gather views and complete benchmarking info – term 1
- GMT workshop 7 November
- Stakeholder workshop in January (which governors would be invited to)
- Emerging thoughts to be considered at GB strategic planning session in February
- Completion of plan ready for July approval and launch 2026-2027

10. Matters not for Publication

None recorded. The presentation would be shared through the Governance Hub post meeting.

11. Dates of Meetings for first Term

- Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 5pm (Ordinary)
- Tuesday 4 November 2025 – 10-3pm SAR Validation
- Thursday 11 December 2025 1pm – Governors invited to Audit and Risk Committee to hear the Financial Statements Auditor's account for the Financial Statements
- Wednesday 17 December 2025 at 5pm (Ordinary)

12. Any other Business

a) Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy

A Adamson presented the Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy, which had been updated to include the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025 update.

Governors ***approved*** the Policy for immediate use.

It was confirmed that Governors would be sent Part 1 of the KCSIE for reading and confirmation of that within the week.

L Woods thanked all present for their involvement in the session.

The meeting ended at 4.47pm