

Agenda No: 03



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS – MAIN MINUTES

Wednesday 2 April 2025 – 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Michael Williams	Chair / Independent	MWi	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Martin Hedley	Vice Chair / Independent	MH	X	
Aneela Ali	Vice Chair / Independent	AA		X
David Brind	Independent	DB	X	
Lisa Crichton-Jones	Independent	LCJ	X	
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD	X	
Martin Gannon	Independent	MG	X	
Darren Curry	Independent	DCu	X	
Eamon Toland	Independent	ET	X	
Maria Craig	Independent	MC	X*	
Peter Francis	Independent	PF	X	
Katy Malia	Staff Governor (Teaching)	KM	X	
Dan Wallace	Staff Governor (Support)	DW	X	
Dan Green	Student Governor (16-18)	DG		X
Milly Wall	Student Governor (19+)	MWa		X
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Attendees				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum and Quality	CT	X	
Ivan Jepson	Director of Business Development and Innovation	IJ	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand and Learner Experience	NH	X	
Vicki Casey	Director of People & OD	VC	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum & Skills	DCh	X	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting.

3428 1. Chair's welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

As per the approval request contained within item 9 regarding the appointment of the teaching Staff Governor, the Board **approved** the appointment of Katy Malia as the Teaching Staff Governor for a term of 2 years.

Introductions took place.

Apologies had been received from AA, MWi and DG. **The Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.**

There were no additional conflicts of interests noted. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts which arose during the meeting. It was agreed members would remain in the meeting when their re-appointment would be discussed.

3429 2. Minutes of previous meetings

- A) The Board **reviewed** the main minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- B) The Board **reviewed** the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.
- C) The Board **reviewed** the minutes of the confidential closed session held on 11 December 2024 and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate record of the discussion.

The minutes were approved.

3430 3. Matters arising and Action Log

3.1. Action Log

The action log was presented. Actions were ongoing with updates provided as per the report. All other actions had been completed or closed.

3.2 Internal Audit: Review of College Internal Financial Controls

Covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted.

3431 4. Chair's Report

The Chair provided a verbal update noting the changing picture across the FE sector, including ongoing funding challenges. The Chair reminded governors of the sessions offered by the AoC to provide governors with updates and learning.

The report was noted.

3432 5. Principal's Report

5.1. Main Report

DA presented the report, providing updates from across the College and the wider landscape. DA specifically highlighted the following:

- Further information was awaited following announcements as part of the Autumn Statement regarding future funding.
- The DfE had updated and confirmed the 16-19 in-year growth funding methodology for 2024/2025. This was less than originally suggested as per the August 2024 guidance, with the detail included within the Finance Report. This had been discussed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- Further information was awaited on contributions towards the National Insurance employers' contribution increase, effective April 2025. The College had assumed 60% funding however this was still to be confirmed by the DfE.
- The College were expecting further learner growth within 2025/2026.
- A statement of intent had been agreed across the North East Regional Colleges Group.
- Further information was awaited following a recent announcement of funding for the Construction sector, including the opportunity to create 10 technical excellence colleges. The Board **supported** the College in finding out more information regarding this, noting that the College could be a hub for the region.
- The annual Staff Survey had recently closed, with a response rate of 83% (1% down on 2024, however with an increased number of staff).
- Pay negotiations were ongoing. The Chair of People Committee noted that the risk of industrial action had been explored at the People Committee.

The report also included a range of success stories from relating to staff, learners and community engagement.

The Board noted the report.

5.2. Board KPI Update Report

DA presented the report and highlighted that a new KPI had been added following the approval of the Digital Strategy, and new KPI had been agreed and would be implemented, following approval of the Sustainability Strategy.

The Board **discussed** the target for attendance, with CT noting that this was stretching. CT confirmed that the College's attendance figure was "true" attendance with learners being present in class or not. Recent data showed that the average Y11 attendance in Gateshead sat at 84%, with research showing high levels of persistent absence in schools. There wasn't a national average benchmark for the College to use as a comparator. CT suggested that short courses would improve the College's attendance figure however it was felt this data wasn't helpful at a College level, and instead the College wanted to understand and address barriers to learning faced by students. The Board **suggested** for attendance to be considered in relation to outcomes, rather than as an outcome itself, instead more of a measure of engagement. It was **suggested** that this KPI should be discussed further at the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee.

Action: PF / CT to facilitate a discussion on the use of attendance as a Board KPI at the next Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee.

The report was noted.

3433 6. Learner Voice

NH presented the report and highlighted that the Course Representative system was one mechanism to capture learner voice, and this had been developed over the past couple of years. The Student Leadership Group had recently met, and this included an engaged group of learners

keen to get involved and understand how they could influence decision making. Departmental panel meetings continued at a local level with the Student Engagement Manager supporting these.

The College had recently asked the Student Leadership Group for their views on how the College could best capture lived experience of learners.

Learners had recently raised the want for there to be more of a connection across each of the College's campuses. This was being explored further.

At the recent Course Representative Conference, external speakers received positive feedback.

Further work was being undertaken to consider how the College best captured the voice of adult learners, apprentices and higher education learners.

NH invited governors to let her know if they would wish to attend future Student Leadership Group meetings.

Action: Governors to confirm to NH if they wish to attend a future Student Leadership Group meeting.

The Board queried the diversity across the Course Representatives – it was agreed that there was more work to do in this area, however there were course representatives from each College course and a range of topics were discussed.

The Board recognised the amount of work undertaken to capture learner voice across the College and how learners were involved in decision making.

The report was noted.

3434 7. Finance Report

DA presented the report and specifically highlighted the reduction in 16-19 full time in-year growth funding as noted within the Principal's Report. DA noted this had been discussed at Finance & General Purposes Committee, alongside the modelling of potential funding scenarios for 2024/2025.

Covered under a confidential minute.

The Vice Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (DB) noted recent discussions at the FGP Committee where the Committee considered negative impact to the College's ESFA Financial Health Score to enable the College to accommodate future learner growth.

It was noted that the FEC metrics had been challenged, based on the funding challenges colleges were facing, and it was expected these would be reviewed going forward.

The Board agreed it would be positive to have the new interim Deputy Principal Finance & Resources consider the sensitivity analysis. In response to a query, DA advised that the finance report contained sensitivity analysis for the current financial year and a sensitivity analysis would be considered for future years, as part of the budget setting process for 2025/2026 and associated 3-year forecast.

The report was noted.

3435 8. College Growth Report

CD noted a conflict with this item with working for a HE provider. It was agreed CD could remain in the meeting and participate in the conversation.

MC left the meeting.

CT presented the report and asked the Board to consider the following questions:

- Does the college wish to respond to 16-19 full time growth for 2025/26 and does it wish to accommodate all / some of the growth and if not all, where to grow / not grow?
- If the college wishes to grow, how will the college fund the growth and what 'red lines' does the college have in finance / quality / people?
- How will the college support increasing demand for support (financial / emotional etc.)?

The Board broke into smaller groups to discuss the questions posed, and fed back the following:

- There was an agreed appetite for growth, however there was a focus on ensuring and maintaining quality of provision, positive learner experience, reputation, consideration of staff welfare, and careful monitoring of finances.
- The links between learner growth with the College's strategy, the regional and national skills needs and course demand. Considering these factors could help the College understand where best to focus growth.
- The opportunity for learners accessing education, linking with learning soft skills / having access to future work opportunities / expanding networks.
- Financial impact of growth across different provision types.
- Consideration of provision not to continue with, to accommodate growth in other areas.
- The needs of the local community.
- Opportunities to collaborate across the North East Colleges Group.
- Partnerships and collaboration opportunities with pre-16 establishments.
- Pathways and progression opportunities for staff.
- Ensuring the strong ethos and focus on employment edge.
- Collation and consideration of staff and learner voice on the idea of further learner growth.
- Consideration of different / new provision types.

The Board **recognised** the appetite for growth in 16-19 student numbers in 2025/26, but that this was dependent on a number of factors and there were risks associated with this. The Board **noted** their role was to support the College and ensure the culture was maintained and it was with the Executive Team to manage this operationally.

Action: CT to collate the feedback and consider this further with the Executive Team as part of business planning for 2025/2026 and beyond.

MG left the meeting.

The Board **thanked** CT for the paper and **noted** that this had been a useful discussion.

The report was noted.

3436 9. Corporation Matters

NT presented the report.

The Board **approved** the following:

- **The re-appointment of Lisa Crichton-Jones for a further term of 4 years.**
- **The re-appointment of Victoria Beattie as a co-opted governor of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for a further term of 1 year.**
- **The re-appointment of Sarah McCourt as a co-opted governor of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for a further term of 1 year.**

- The re-appointment of Chris Forster as a co-opted governor of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for a further term of 1 year.
- The appointment of Katy Malia as the Teaching Staff Governor for a term of 2 years.
- The awarding of the Internal Audit contract, as per the report, for a 40 month period, with effect from April 2025, with an option to extend for a further period of 24 months.
- The awarding of the Internal Audit contract, as per the report, for a 48 month period, with effect from April 2025.

Action: NT to process appointments / re-appointments.

Action: NT to notify procurement that the internal and external auditor tender recommendations had been approved.

The report was noted.

3437 10. Review of Strategic Risk Register

DA presented the report, highlighted the proposed revisions to risk appetite, noting the changes had been supported through committee discussion.

The Board approved the proposed revisions to risk appetite.

The report was noted.

3438 11. Starred Items flowing from Committees

11.1 Committee Chairs Update

NT presented the report.

The Board approved the following:

- Governor Recruitment, Development and Succession Planning Policy
- LGPS Pension Discretions
- Family Friendly
- Preventing Bullying and Harassment
- Alcohol and Drugs
- Equal Pay
- EDI Objectives
- Tuition Fees 2025/2026
- Risk Management
- Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Policy

Action: NT to work with Executive Leads to ensure relevant publication of the approved policies.

The report was noted.

3439 12. Any Other Business

N/A

3440 13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 2 July 2025 at 4.00pm.