

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD
HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM ON
TUESDAY 10th DECEMBER 2024 AT 5.30 PM**

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
David Allsop	Independent (Chair)	DA	X	-
Chris Todd	Principal and CEO	CT	X	-
Carl Bozeate	Independent	CB	X	-
Guy Brown	Independent	GB	X	-
Sarah Jones	Independent	SJ	X	-
Matthew Taylor	Independent	MT	X	-
Mark Short	Independent	MS	X	-
David McHugh	Independent	DM	X	-
Stuart Corbridge	Independent	SC	X	-
Andrew Hayday	Independent	AH	X	-
Helen Brennan	Staff Governor	HB	X	-
Nicola Dixon	Staff Governor	ND	-	X

Attendees	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Susan Errington	Deputy Principal	SE	X	-
Rachel Holmes	Director of HR	RH	X	-
Tina Hannant	Vice Principal – Finance & Resources	TH	X	-

Observers	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
William Fullen	Prospective Independent Governor	BF	X	-
Monika Nangia	Prospective Independent Governor	MN	X	-
Joanne Race	Prospective Independent Governor	JR	X	-
Matthew Waller	Prospective Student Governor	MW	X	-

Clerk	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Elaine Gaines	Head of Governance	EG	X	

Due to unexpected circumstances the scheduled Annual Safeguarding Training for Governors was postponed and will be rescheduled to take place in the New Year.

1. Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the second Board meeting of the academic year. A warm welcome was extended to Mr William Fullen, Dr Monika Nangia and Ms Joanne Race, in attendance to observe the meeting as prospective Independent Governors, and also to Matthew Waller, in attendance as an observer and prospective Student Governor (Apprentice).

DA reported that, due to work pressures, resignations have been submitted by SH and CL.

Apologies were received from ND. There were no declarations of interest.

The Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings and Matters Arising

2.1. **Minutes – Corporation**

Governors reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th October 2024.

The following corrections were requested:

- Page 2 – the word been, will be added into the last paragraph *To date there has...*
- Page 3 – the word to, is not required *Checks are taking...*
- Page 5 – the title should read Next Steps

Subject to the amendments above being made, the Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th October 2024.

2.2. **Minutes – Search & Governance Committee**

The Search & Governance Committee Chair provided a verbal update to Governors, regarding the meeting held on the 17th October 2024, and reported the following:

External Board Review - A special meeting of the Search & Governance Committee took place earlier today, with regard to the External Board Review, the Committee considered three proposals against four criteria and endorsed the appointment of the Association of Colleges (AoC) to carry out the review.

Appraisal of the Corporation Chair – The Committee agreed the Appraisal process for the Corporation Chair will begin after Christmas; the Head of Governance will circulate the relevant paperwork to Governors and the Executive Team to obtain their feedback and the appraisal of the Corporation Chair will be carried out by the Senior Independent Governor.

Questions/comments were invited – none were raised.

The Board received the minutes of the Search & Governance Committee held on the 17th October 2024.

Following the endorsement by the Search & Governance Committee the Board received and approved the following documents:

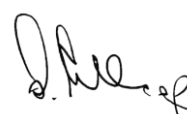
- Search & Governance Committee Annual Report : 2023-24
- Terms of Reference
- Governor Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Revised Instrument and Articles of Government

2.3. **Minutes – Remuneration Committee**

The Remuneration Committee Chair provided a verbal update to Governors regarding the meeting held on 17th October 2024, and drew their attention to the following:

Committee Chair – The Remuneration Committee appointed SJ to the role of Committee Chair.

Appraisals of Senior Postholders – The Committee received and considered the Appraisals of the following Senior Postholders (Principal & CEO, Deputy Principal/Deputy CEO and the Head of Governance). Going forward the appraisals will take place in September/October to enable a review of the previous academic year alongside the relevant AoC Benchmarking Data; after this has been considered, the Remuneration Committee will make a recommendation to the Corporation Board in December.



The Board **received** the minutes of the Remuneration Committee held on the 17th October 2024

Following the endorsement by the Remuneration Committee the Board **received and approved** the following documents:

- Remuneration Committee Annual Report : 2023-24
- Terms of Reference

2.4. **Minutes – Finance & Resources Committee**

The Finance & Resources Committee Chair provided a verbal update to Governors regarding the meeting held on Tuesday 26th November 2024, and drew their attention to the following points:

Finance Team – DA stated the recent team vacancies combined with a lack of detailed knowledge and experience of temporary staff in some areas, has impacted progress. However, newly appointed staff are in post and have made a positive impression.

Management Accounts – The Committee reviewed the month 2 management accounts and the month 3 management accounts have been provided to the committee for their perusal.

Cleaning Contract – The tendering exercise is underway and presentations from shortlisted providers will take place in the New Year.

T-Level Contract – There has been no response from [Redacted – commercially sensitive] regarding the doors. The retention payment will remain withheld until all issues are resolved satisfactorily.

Questions/comments were invited.

[Redacted – commercially sensitive].

SJ asked if the ED&I Committee was an internal committee or at Board level. RH confirmed the committee was an internal committee comprised of staff.

No other questions/comments were received.

The Board **received** the minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee held on the 26th November 2024.

Following the endorsement by the Finance & Resources Committee, Governors **received and approved** the following documents:

- Public Benefit Statement
- Corporate Social Responsibility Statement
- Treasury Management Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Equality Objectives
- People Strategy



2.5. Minutes – Audit & Risk Committee

The Audit & Risk Committee Chair provided a verbal update regarding the meeting held on Tuesday 26th November 2024 and reported the members of the Finance & Resources Committee were in attendance whilst the Annual Report and Finance Statements – 2023/24 were presented by the TH and Azets.

Following the endorsement of the Audit & Risk Committee, Governors **received and approved** the following documents:

- Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report : 2023-24
- Terms of Reference
- Risk Management Policy
- Risk Management Procedure
- Annual Report and Accounts : 2023-24
- External Auditors Report on the Annual Report and Accounts including regularity
- Letter of Representation – External Audit
- External Audit Service

3. **Strategy & Direction**

3.1. **Strategic Monitoring and Performance**

CT began by drawing attention to the adapted reporting format. A cover sheet would now be provided for each report, providing an executive summary and demonstrating alignment with the College's strategic priorities and aims. This format is similar to an example kindly shared by GB.

CT introduced his Strategic Performance Monitoring report. This year, strong progress has been made towards our strategic priorities, with significant advancements in half of our 18 aims and steady progress on the rest.


Key Achievements - Key Achievements include recruiting new governors and launching employer forums in key curriculum areas. In our education programmes for young people, a focus on enrichment and attendance has yielded positive results. Learners have participated in skills competitions, supported local charities, attended trips, and engaged with guest speakers relating to careers and workplace developments. It has been a productive and vibrant start to the year.

Challenges identified - While challenges are fewer now than ever; the Executive Team have concerns about leadership capacity and capability in some key areas. Our ambition to become an 'Outstanding' college has inevitably raised standards and highlighted some areas for development. A review of the leadership team structure is underway, with plans for some positive changes in the new year.

Our Estates Strategy has become a pressing issue due to increased learner numbers and planned future growth, leading to space and timetabling challenges. Addressing these concerns will be a key priority after Christmas.

Skills Strategy - Developing a Skills Strategy for the College is a key priority, highlighted during an Ofsted session attended by the Principal and Deputy Principal in November. This strategy will complement our Accountability Agreement and Curriculum Plan, aligning with local skills priorities and strengthening our position for the next Ofsted inspection, where we are looking to demonstrate a strong contribution to local skills needs.

Performance against the Key Performance Indicators – The Principal reported no concerns against the College's identified KPIs.



Attendance and Achievement – Attendance, which was identified as a significant challenge in the previous year, has improved dramatically. Apprenticeship achievement rates are now excellent, and we continue to perform strongly against the DfE's Apprenticeship Accountability Framework.

Financial Health – The College remains in good financial health, with a positive start to the year in terms of funding performance. This promising start could result in some unplanned in-year growth funding, which has not been budgeted for.

Risks – CT stated his main concern relates to the Estate and the need to develop a strategy to address key challenges over the coming weeks and months.

Questions/comments were invited.

CB inquired about the challenges related to leadership. In response, CT explained that capacity was needed in apprenticeships and education programmes for young people to support the College in its drive to raise standards. Proposals are currently in development and will be implemented in the new year. The Principal will provide an update to the Board at the next meeting. At this stage, no information has been communicated to staff.

MT inquired about the Estates Strategy; specifically whether the building is still fit for purpose. In response, CT explained that the planned changes are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. He highlighted that there is potential for growth in some curriculum areas like construction, linked to the government's drive for increased housebuilding. Facilities pressure was also evident in electrical engineering. This could present an opportunity for expansion and would be a feature of the Estates strategy.

[Redacted – commercially sensitive].

AH inquired if there was any capital funding available that could be utilised. CT cited the announcement by Baroness Jacqui Smith of £300m of new capital funding to support FE colleges to maintain, improve and ensure the suitability of their estate. Hopefully some of this funding will be available to the College however, at this stage, the method of allocation is unknown.

GB praised the report and expressed support for the involvement of the Quality & Standards Committee in the development of the Skills Strategy, suggesting the College draw on best practice from Education Partnership North East; an Outstanding provider. CT agreed to progress this item and noted that he and SE had a productive meeting with Toni Rhodes (Deputy CEO / EPNE) last week relating to curriculum planning and skills.

SJ wanted to know if the Risks identified in the report link into the new Risk Management Policy and Risk Register. CT confirmed that they did, and that this would be developed further in the new year following the approval of the policy. TH added that the revised Risk Register will be launched in January 2025 following a workshop session with the Senior Leadership Team. CT confirmed that future strategic performance reports would include the strategic risk register.

No other comments or questions were raised.

Governors **received** and the Strategic Monitoring and Performance Report and:

- **Noted** the positive progress being made towards the delivery of our strategic priorities and aims, alongside the challenges identified.
- **Noted** the intention to develop a Skills Strategy and Estates Strategy.



- **Noted** the intention to review the current Leadership Structure to ensure it remains aligned with our strategic priorities, aims and ambitions.

3.2. **Confidential item**

[Redacted – commercially sensitive]

3.3. **Principal and CEO Report**

CT introduced his report and referred to the Ministerial visit of Gareth Thomas that took place yesterday. The College hosted the Minister, Liz Twist MP, and representatives from local employers and employer representative bodies for a roundtable discussion on government support for economic growth. The Minister and MP appeared engaged, while SE and CT promoted the College throughout the meeting. Key themes discussed were poverty, education, skills development, business support (grants, rates, and energy), and national insurance as a barrier to growth. The event provided valuable insights and positive PR for the College.

CT then moved onto Ofsted (item 3.5 of the report). He stated that he and SE had attended an Ofsted session at the AoC Conference in November, where it was indicated that the College is likely to be inspected again in the 2025-26 academic year. He added the College is in a strong position and he sought approval to create an Ofsted readiness plan in the new year. This plan will focus on preparing Governors for inspection and the development of a range of case studies across all areas of the organisation to highlight our strengths and achievements.

CT informed Governors of the visit by the North-East Mayor, Kim McGuinness, on 9th January 2025; to officially open the College's T-Level facilities. If available, Governors are welcome to attend the stakeholder brunch at 11.25 am. Governors were asked to notify the Head of Governance of their intention.

Questions/comments were invited.

SC cited the recent government announcement regarding T-Level students and that they will now be able to complete some of their placement hours remotely. He wanted to know how this will impact the College. In response, CT stated the work placement element of T-Levels had not been a significant challenge for Derwentside College, due to its significant volume of employer partners. It may, however, prove useful in the digital pathway, where employer placements have proven slightly more challenging due to a lack of businesses in the local area.

No other comments or questions were raised.

Governors **received** the Principal and CEO report and:

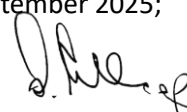
- **Noted** the executive summary and content of the report, including the risks arising.
- **Endorsed** the proposal to develop an inspection readiness plan via the Quality and Standards Committee, with progress to be reported back to the Board once complete.

4. **Curriculum Quality & Learning**

4.1. **Curriculum Planning**

SE introduced her report, providing an update on the first round of Curriculum Planning which took place in the autumn term across our three different provision types.

Ofsted - SE referred Governors to section 2.2 of the report. This outlined changes to Ofsted inspections, with overall effectiveness grades being removed from September 2025;



following consultations on a revised inspection framework. However, the focus on how providers contribute to meeting skills needs through their curriculum will remain a key priority. The College was previously assessed as making a 'reasonable' contribution to meeting local skills needs, with the main area for improvement being the consistency of employer involvement in curriculum. In response to this judgement, three Industry Employer Forums were launched last year, and these will be expanded across all subject sectors this year. So far this year two forums have been hosted in Engineering and Health & Social Care, which are considered extremely successful in terms of both actions and results.

Pause and Review Policy - The report highlighted the Government's Pause and Review Policy, which enabled the offering of BTEC Level 3 in Health and Social Care alongside the T-Level in Health this year. The review's outcome is expected soon, and the newly appointed Education Select Committee, led by Helen Hayes, recently urged the Education Secretary to consider the evidence. They stressed that providing only A-Levels or T-Levels would not adequately serve students with differing abilities.

Curriculum and Assessment Review - The report also highlighted the upcoming Curriculum and Assessment Review, led by Professor Becky Francis, which covers Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 5 and focuses on addressing key challenges to attainment for all young people. This review has the potential to be a game-changer for how the curriculum is delivered in the future, depending on the recommendations made and whether they are accepted.

Growth and Skills Levy - The new Growth and Skills Levy, which will allow a broader range of training to be funded through the apprenticeship levy, presents a significant opportunity, especially given our strong focus on apprenticeships. SE was also pleased to see that the consultation on this policy has been expanded to include Construction and Health & Social Care, alongside the eight 'growth-driving sectors' identified in the industrial strategy. These sectors are in urgent need of targeted skills training beyond traditional apprenticeships.

Questions and comments were invited – none were raised.

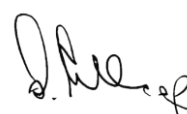
Apprenticeships - SE referred Governors to section 3 of the report. In apprenticeships, all evidence indicates the apprenticeship offer of 34 Standards remains highly effective. We deliver all ten of the most popular standards in our region, which also align with the top volume nationally. High-demand areas include Residential Childcare, where growing demand and our strong reputation have led to the addition of an eighth teaching staff member, and Electrical Installation, which is equally in demand across both apprenticeships and Education Programmes for Young People. Our sustained progress on quality metrics, aligned with our curriculum offer, positions us to capitalise on both regional opportunities and new initiatives from the Government.

Adult Education - Our Adult Education provision has entered a new phase with fully devolved budgets under the North East Devolution Deal. October is early in the curriculum planning cycle due to our rolling recruitment approach, to determine the full impact of our current plan and whether any deviation is needed for 2025-26. However, Devolution offers significant opportunities, particularly as most of our adult education programmes are employer-led; a distinctive feature for a Further Education College. The initial planning has been comprehensive, focusing on future trends and key developments essential for delivery. For 2025-26, our intended plan will maintain the four aspects of provision detailed in the report, with anticipated growth in online flexible learning.

Questions/comments were invited.

[Redacted – commercially sensitive]

No other questions or comments were received.



Education Programmes for Young People - SE was pleased to report a 19% increase in learner recruitment at R04 (end of November), with 62 more learners compared to last year. This marks a significant growth milestone, as R04 determines future allocations. While our provision aligns with national priority areas, the use of strategic market research and external market scanning was more limited in this curriculum cycle. The focus was instead, on planning and resourcing for further anticipated growth; including the roll-out of Year 1 and Year 2 T-Level provision, across five routes starting September 2025. This expansion of Level 3 provision represents a major scale-up, requiring detailed planning and prioritisation of recruitment efforts in the coming year.

Questions/comments were invited.

MT inquired about potential areas of growth that we would like to expand upon. In response, CT highlighted Electrical Engineering, noting the workshop space has doubled and it was still not adequate to meet demand. Challenges are being addressed and scaled appropriately. Efficiency in timetabling and room utilisation was also mentioned as a focus. Additionally, the development of the Skills Strategy will be aligned with the curriculum requirements.

AH asked whether the actual course enrolments aligned with the plan. SE responded that Beauty was the only curriculum area with a below expectation enrolment in 2024-25. In contrast, Electrical Installation exceeded expectations, with high interest, but enrolments had to be curtailed due to constraints in workshop space.

AH asked whether learners who could not attend College, or enrol on the course they wanted to, were enrolled onto other courses. SE mentioned Delta North as an example. CT added that poor GCSE results from local schools positively impacted college enrolments in 2024-25, with more learners enrolling on further education courses. He also noted that many other local Colleges had reported a significant upturn in enrolment in 2024-25.

AH wanted to know if the demographic had changed. CT cited that demographic rises were evident, but also that the College had successfully secured an increased market share.

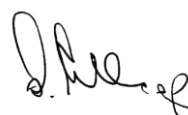
Accountability Agreement – SE reported we have a strong Accountability Agreement in place and aim to develop a comprehensive Skills Strategy and increase Board member involvement in curriculum planning. To support this, we have engaged a provider to conduct a curriculum review and gap analysis for the NECA region. This independent review will offer recommendations on curriculum development, highlight potential opportunities, and include a recruitment analysis identifying the most in-demand roles. Six of our largest SSA areas are included in the analysis, with the report expected by early February, followed by a presentation. It is anticipated this review will serve as a solid foundation for shaping our Skills Strategy and future curriculum development.

Questions/comments were invited.

GB inquired as to what happens next, is there a Business Plan? SE stated the second and third round of curriculum planning will take place. CT added that the College usually produced an accountability agreement and curriculum plan, which are approved by the Board in July each year. CT is keen to get governors more engaged in curriculum planning and that this would be a key theme at the away day in May 2025.

Governors **received** the Curriculum Planning report and:

- **Noted** the executive summary and content of the report, including the risks arising.
- **Noted** the early activity undertaken so far in developing the Curriculum Plan for 2025-26.



- **Endorsed** the Curriculum and Review Gap Analysis work to be carried out by 'Lightcast' with a presentation of findings and recommendations to be presented early in 2025.

5. **Finance & Resources**

5.1. **Staff Survey**

RH introduced her report. The College participated in the York College Staff Survey Benchmarking exercise for the third consecutive year, involving an internal staff survey benchmarked against 45 other colleges. Despite a slight decline in rankings, the College remains strong, ranking in the top 5 for five out of six categories and maintaining high scores overall. To address the identified areas for improvement, an action plan has been developed. Detailed scores and actions were outlined in the report and appendices.

RH reported the response rate to the staff survey was notably lower this year at 77%, compared to 87% in the previous two years. However, this reduction is not a concern, as the initial 87% rate was exceptionally high. A lower response rate could indicate higher staff contentment, as more satisfied employees may feel less inclined to complete the survey. Additionally, 19 new employees joined during the period leading up to the survey and may not have felt ready to participate.

Our results have seen a slight decline compared to last year, though they remain high overall, starting from a very strong baseline. Our scores are still favourable when compared to the average scores of all colleges and we ranked 3rd in 4 out of 6 categories among 46 colleges. While these rankings are lower than in previous years, our scores have not dropped significantly— in fact, two categories have actually improved—so this is not a cause for concern.

Questions/comments were invited.


AH asked if the survey highlighted any areas that RH was disappointed with. RH cited the Learning Support Team results, and added the Executive Team met with them earlier today to listen to their concerns and the points raised were something that can be worked through. CT added that the team were really positive during the meeting, and a lot of issues were identified that can be easily addressed. Generally, these types of focus groups have been really positive. SE cited the focus groups held with Lecturers, with a theme of attendance and punctuality, which had been highly impactful.

DM referred to the response to Q24 – *"There is an opportunity for me to progress within the College"*. In response, CT stated that providing progression opportunities is not always possible in a small organisation. He also identified that progression can be outside of the organisation, and that some staff did not always appreciate this when filling in the survey. This would be given more thought in the formation of our ongoing action plan arising from the survey. RH added that staff are encouraged to consider their progression as part of the appraisal process.

GB stated he thought the survey results and rankings were excellent, with other governors in agreement.

CT stated that he was slightly disappointed with the College's position in the rankings this year. This was not caused by the College's results deteriorating, but more to do with other Colleges taking the survey more seriously. It now represents a more competitive benchmark.

No other questions/comments were received.



Governors received the Staff Survey report and:

- **reviewed and considered** the findings of the staff survey and
- **considered** any areas for improvement;
- **noted** the actions identified to improve and maintain our level of results.

At 6.45 pm the Chair paused the proceedings to allow Governors to take a 5-minute comfort break. The Corporation Chair met with the three prospective Independent Governors to confirm they were happy to continue with the process of being a Governor of the College. They all agreed. MW agreed that he too would like to continue with the process, and it was agreed that he will attend the Quality & Standards Committee in February 2025 to observe the meeting.

The meeting resumed at 6.50 pm.

6. Governor Appointments

Appointments to the Corporation Board

As recommended by the Search & Governance Committee, Governors **approved** the following appointments to the Corporation Board for a four-year term (subject to a successful probationary review):

- Ms Joanne Race, Dr Monika Nangia and Mr William Fullen.

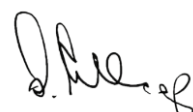
As recommended by the Search & Governance Committee, Governors **approved** the appointments to the following committees:

- Ms Joanne Race to the Finance & Resources Committee
- Mr William Fullen to the Audit & Risk Committee
- Dr Monika Nangia to the Quality & Standards Committee
- Mr Mark Smith as a co-opted member of the Audit & Risk Committee

7. Any Other Items of Urgent Business

- **Christmas Wellbeing Day** – RH invited Governors to the College Christmas Wellbeing Day that will take place on Thursday 19th December. Starting with a festive breakfast at 8.30 am, staff will take part in a variety of activities during the morning, followed by the Quiz in the afternoon. If Governors would like to attend they should let EG or RH know.
- **Safeguarding Lead Governor** – DA reminded Governors the recent resignation of Carole Loader has resulted in a vacancy for a Safeguarding Lead Governor. The job description was circulated to Governors in advance of the meeting for consideration. To date no volunteers have been received. DA reminded Governors to consider this important role and to notify EG if they would like to volunteer.

The meeting closed at 6.58 pm.



Board Meetings

Actions Arising

Date: 10th December 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
3.1	<u>Skills Strategy</u> – A Skills Strategy will be developed and presented to the Board. A small task group would be convened to support this, made up of Quality and Standards governors.	Principal / Deputy Principal July 2025	
3.2	[Redacted – commercially sensitive]		
3.3	<u>Ofsted Readiness Plan</u> – An inspection readiness plan will be developed with the Quality & Standards Committee and progress reported to the Board once complete.	Deputy Principal February 2025	
4.1	<u>Curriculum Review and Gap Analysis</u> – The findings and recommendations will be presented to the Board early in the New Year.	Principal March 2025 / Away Day (May)	

Date of Meeting: 9th July 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
4.1	<u>TeacherMatic</u> – A report will be provided to the Quality & Standards Committee regarding the impact of the TeacherMatic software	Head of Quality & Standards	<u>Complete</u> – 4 February 2025

