



TyneCoastCollege

Meeting of the Board

Venue: South Tyneside College/Teams (T)

Date: Thursday 2 April 2026

Time: 1.30pm – 3.30pm

Present: Malcolm Grady (in the Chair)
Jim Dafter (T)
Joanne Fanning
Neil Henry
Clive Johnson
Nicola McCluskey
Andrew Potts
Mark Turnbull
Donya Urwin (T)
Eve Wedderburn
Lindsey Whiterod

Apologies: Gary Hindmarch
Michael Johnston
Alan Nixon
Rachael Taylor

In Attendance: Neil Longstaff (Director of Governance)
Lorna Lister (Senior Governor Support Officer)
Jane Cuthbertson (Chief Operating Officer)
Karen Ritchie (Director of Finance)
Craig Scott (Executive Director of Digital and Projects)
Simon Ashton (Principal South Shields Marine School)
David Gardner (Interim Principal)
Emilia Porter (Student President)
Becky Edwards (Deputy FE Commissioner)

ACTION TRACKER

Minutes

ITEM NO.	ISSUES	ACTION
1.	Apologies for absence The meeting commenced with the Chair welcoming everyone to the meeting and introductions were made, which included a new governor and Becky Edwards (Deputy FE Commissioner). The Board received and approved apologies for absence from those identified above after having first considered the reasons for their absence.	
2.	Declarations	

	<u>2.1 Declarations of interests</u> The Chair reminded members to declare any conflicts of interest as they arose on the agenda. There were standing declarations for links to Tyne Coast Academy Trust for the following: MG, LWh, GH, JD, CJ and JF. <u>2.2 Business to be raised under Item 10</u> None declared at this stage.	
3.	Confirmation of the minutes of the Board The minutes of the meetings of the Board held on the 18 and 23 December 2025, 22 January, 16 and 23 February, 3 and 12 March 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair. The Chair expressed gratitude to NL and LL for their accurate and detailed minutes. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda The Action Tracker was reviewed, with updates provided on various actions. Notable updates included the completion of several actions from past meetings and the current status of ongoing actions, such as discussions with Atkins Realis and the progress of a contract with Castle.	
4.	Strategic Matters <u>4.1 Feedback – FE Commissioner Visit</u> With the agreement of governors, the Chair deferred this item to later on the agenda (Item 11). <u>4.2 Chairs Update/Actions</u> There were no new actions or updates from the Chair to report at this time. <u>4.3 Report of the Chief Executive incl Academy Trust Update</u> The CEO highlighted the Strategic Dashboard for critical analysis. The CEO gave an overview on the following areas: • Finance Update • FE Curriculum Update • Marine School Update • HR Update • IT Update • Signage at TyneMet College • TCAT update on proposed merger with GORSE Academy With regard to TCAT, it was suggested that a meeting be arranged between the CEOs and Chairs of the College Board and TCAT Trustees to discuss the future relationship between the College and Trust alongside the performance of the Trust and other associated matters. A governor highlighted that within the TCAT update there was a financial risk and the College, as the sponsor, should be kept aware of these issues. Q. <i>Did the financial risk fall onto the College?</i> No, however the College had financial oversight/influence and had to manage the risk accordingly.	LWh

It was reported that a quality team had been embedded into the Trust to address the Ofsted results. A governor also highlighted that there had been some big wins highlighted within the report, however, it explained that the CEO was Acting Principal for 40% of his time at another Trust and questioned whether it was appropriate when his own Trust had issues.

DG provided an update for the Board on recently released National Rates, which had increased by 1.3% for 16-18 years. DG remained confident moving into the summer exam season.

Q. Was there a Buddy system? There was a Peer Mentor System being implemented by Student Services.

The CEO highlighted the Red areas within the Strategic dashboard and updated the Board as follows:

- Facilities (TyneMet campus) – There was political change in the area, and a task group had been set up to which stakeholders had been invited to join to set out a plan for the area. DG was leading on this piece of work and noted the stakeholders were very engaged.
- Digital (Training for staff and students) – Focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the use of Copilot with an increase in use of 260%. Elements of training to align with the new build. Staff digital skills could be improved, however this was being addressed with training sessions. 3 Digital Ambassadors had been recruited at the STC campus.
- People (Professional development for staff/Leadership programs for managers) – There was significant Continual Professional Development underway, which was being reviewed against the new Further Education & Skills Inspection framework to ensure time and funds were being spent within the correct areas, this was a work in progress.
- Partnerships (Seek own accreditation) – This was for the HE provision; there had been a national pause with the Office for Students (OfS) so could not apply and there was no guarantee that this would be lifted either. Maintaining contact with Sunderland University.

Q. It was identified in the Marine School Strategy that IT infrastructure and knowledge was an issue, why was this? The digital literacy of staff had been highlighted in the older generation. CS spoke to SA regularly about the issue. SA explained that more knowledgeable staff assisted those less knowledgeable.

The CEO reported that there was no change with performance targets and these were reviewed and measured against within the Performance Review meeting.

Governors were made aware that the newly installed sign at TyneMet had detached itself from the roof but had not caused any injury or significant damage. The incident was being investigated and the College was liaising with the insurers. The Student Governor expressed her dissatisfaction at this situation and asked if this could be used as an example in the students learning, where relevant, to explain the process from the procurement of the contractor to resolving issues when things 'go wrong'.

4.4 Progress Against Strategic Priorities in Strategic Plan

The CEO explained that the Strategic Dashboard covered the Strategic Priorities, this was a live document discussed at each Board meeting. The priorities were being reviewed at least on an annual basis due to the fast-moving landscape in FE/Marine. Governors were also reminded that this review was built into the summer term Governor Development Day along with review of the Accountability Agreement and associated documents.

	It was noted that international business had been affected due to the Iraq War Resolved: i. That the Board acknowledge the information as presented. ii. That the Director of HR is to present a report on CPD at the next termly Board meeting. <u>4.5 Estates Strategy and New Build Update</u> The COO updated the Board with the following: • RSM works re. VAT had been completed and letter sent to the HMRC. • VAT assumptions had been shared with stakeholders. • Queen Alexandra Campus had been sold. • LocateEd had visited Redhead Unit and had advised that it had been poorly maintained. Other options were being explored, which would vary the Development Agreement, which had been accepted. • LocateEd had also visited the BT Building and reported 'it was stunning'. • CFFR update – as the College was forecasted to be below recommended cash days (40) further modelling had been conducted, which had improved the College's position. The CFFR had been submitted to the DfE. <i>Q. Looking for assurance regarding the cash days, excellent improvement so far however are you still going to try and make up the cash days by 2027?</i> Yes, JC was confident the College would regain the days and indicated that 40 days was the FE Commissioner (FEC) recommendation; the Deputy Commissioner was not overly concerned. <i>Q. Was Readheads definitely off the table?</i> Yes, the Capital Project Board would scrutinise any further recommendations. <i>Q. It was asked whether the COO was more comfortable with that decision?</i> Yes. <u>4.6 SSMS Marine Strategy/HE Strategy</u> SA explained that the strategy had been presented to the Quality Committee and some improvements and changes were suggested, which had had now been completed. The Strategy was now a three-year plan due to rapid changes in the sector. The strategy focused on international business growth, future fuels, and resource management. Risks included changes in government policy on international student visas and the introduction of an international student levy. The strategy aimed to mitigate these risks by reducing in-country time for students and maintaining growth in income and course offerings. The teams work on alternative fuel training was highlighted, positioning the Marine School as one of only three global providers. A governor praised the SWOT analysis that had been completed as part of the strategy and that due to the new build, the Marine School was going to be able to offer so much more. The governor stated that it was good to see that the department was ambitious however, felt assured that the school only planned for what was achievable. <i>Q. Resources a limiting factor, was there a possibility to change working patterns especially with working with international students?</i> Yes, discussions were being held with the HR Director with a possibility of the day being split into 3. The Chair of Finance noted the positive strategy in funds and spend. <i>Q. The student governor highlighted the student experience could be better outside the classroom, could student services assist?</i> Students were in the classroom from 9-5 and it was acknowledged that further enrichment activities were needed and these were being explored. <i>Q. Re. aging staff, was there proactive recruitment?</i> Yes, these were very specialist positions and the issue arose around the application and appointment. Most applicants	AE
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	were still employed at sea and had to work their notice period which delayed their start date. Q. Why do international students pay more in fees? Marine students differ a great deal from HE students, as Marine offer wrap around courses, simulation experiences and more teaching hours. The Marine School has an excellent reputation in the field; although not the cheapest and it could potentially charge more for what the student received. Q. Do more companies not fund? No, fees were self-funded. The civic reception for the 165th year of the Marine School further underscored the School's significant impact, with speeches from the Leader of the Council and the Mayor praising its contributions. This was attended by Governors. <u>HE Strategy</u> The purpose of the report was to update the Board on the progress of the HE Strategy. The following was highlighted and discussed: • Recommendations from the Quality Committee were taken into consideration and amendments made. • Review undertaken of HE Management with the Quality department taking a greater role in the quality data and quality reporting. Relevant Principals were responsible for HE within their areas. • The curriculum planning process included an “invest/divest” portion. Currently delivering HTQ’s in Computing and Business and would grow this as new qualifications become available in line with the Local Skills Improvement Plan. • The Student Union was taking a much more active role within the College. Curriculum and Policy changes were discussed with the students at the relevant Student Forums, particularly in Marine. • Specific HE Staff Development Sessions were arranged in order to develop awareness of HE Quality processes and how they differed from the FE Model and a Scholarly Activity Forum was held on a termly basis. • Foundation Degree Awarding Powers remained a priority for 2030, however the application process would not begin until after the Capital Project was completed. Structures were being put in place to meet the requirements of FDAP prior to application, so that supporting evidence was available to present. Resolved: That the Board acknowledge the information as presented. That the Board approve the Marine Strategy for 2025-2028. That the Board adopt the HE Strategy 2025-2030.	
5.	Audit/Risk <u>5.1 Committee Chair Report</u> JD provided feedback on the recent Audit Committee meeting. JD stated that the meeting was as per the business plan, covering key areas such as risk management and internal audit reports, although an additional element on the agenda was training by RSM on governor roles and responsibilities in relation to risk management, which was well-received and highlighted the importance of robust risk discussions. The internal audit reports received reasonable or substantial assurance, and the committee also reviewed the information security policy, which was accepted with minor updates. JD emphasised the importance of ongoing vigilance in risk management and the positive feedback from RSM on the committee's discussions. Resolved: That the Board accept the verbal report and acknowledge the information as presented.	

	<u>5.2 Risk Register – Risks & Issues</u> Confidential item	
6.	Finance/Resources <u>6.1 Committee Chair Report</u> CJ informed the Board that the College was financially sound, however mitigations were in place to support improvement with further improvement needed the following year. Disaster management scenarios discussed and recovery looked good. HR developments were working well and staff voice was impending. The Committee had regular updates on estates. <u>6.2 Management Accounts and Commentary</u> Confidential item <u>6.3 Business Continuity Update</u> CS provided an annual update on business continuity, noting that there had been no major incidents in the past couple of years. To maintain preparedness, the College conducted simulated disaster exercises. CS highlighted the importance of these drills in preparing for potential cyber-attacks, which were a significant risk in the sector. The Board was reassured that the College's cyber security measures were robust and continuously updated to address emerging threats. The planned emergency lockdown exercise was also noted as a critical component of the College's business continuity strategy, this would be conducted later in the academic year. The Board appreciated the detailed update and the proactive approach to business continuity and risk management. Q. <i>Did the Risk Register include the Marine School?</i> Yes, all sites including Marine, which incorporated global risks. Q. <i>Were our partners such as Castle and Atkins Realis aware of the risks to Cyber Security?</i> Yes, both had the required Cyber Essentials standard. Information reported by Castle was that they had no ongoing issues. The CEO assured the Board that the Risk Register was a standing item on the agenda of the Executive Group as it was a constant moving target. It was noted that protecting the students was the main priority. CS informed the Board that recent governor training had incorporated Cyber Security. Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.	
7.	Quality/Curriculum/Standards/Students <u>7.1 Committee Chair Report</u> There was nothing to report on this occasion in addition to the reports already on the agenda. <u>7.2 Student Union report</u> EW provided an update on the Student Union activities and highlighted the success of enrichment activities, noting an incremental increase in student engagement and 100% retention once students participated in an activity. However, the challenges in gathering attendance data and the need for more efficient metrics was discussed.	

There was a plan to work on projects such as a sensory garden, which would involve both students and the local community. The importance of co-designing facilities with student input was also emphasised.

Student Presidents for both TyneMet and South Tyneside Campus's had been appointed. EW reported that she had accepted the role of the of Student President for TM, however was awaiting onboarding. The STC position was filled by a younger student (under 18yrs) who was to be supported by Emelia Porter (Enrichment Officer-Careers).

It was reported that the Student Union was looking at a dedicated Marine Student President; the outcome would be reported to the Board at the next termly meeting.

The union was in the process of nominating the next Student Governor, EW stated she would support the successful candidate into the role as it was a excellent opportunity.

It was reported that the AoC had webinars to support the Student and Staff Governors, NMc and NL stated that they would link in with the new Student Governor when appointed.

Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented and thank EW for her hard work whilst representing the students on the Board.

7.3 Quality Reports – Overview incl update on Accountability Agreement

Confidential item

7.4 SSMS Quality Report

Confidential item

7.5 Dr Winterbottom Hall SAR 2024/25

SA presented the Dr Winterbottom Self-Assessment Report to the Board, which examined the quality, safety, and effectiveness of the Halls of Residence against the Ofsted Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) for boarding and residential provision.

Evidence demonstrated that students benefitted from a safe and supportive living environment where safeguarding was well-embedded, risks were effectively managed and staff maintained strong, trusting relationships with residents. Students reported feeling secure, listened to and well-supported, contributing positively to their wellbeing and personal development.

It was stated that leadership and management provided clear oversight, ensuring compliance with statutory expectations and driving continuous improvement across the accommodation. Regular monitoring, staff development, and collaboration with pastoral and academic services contributed to a cohesive approach to student welfare.

The review confirmed strong performance across core areas of the framework, with ongoing work focused on strengthening wellbeing initiatives and enhancing the residential experience.

Q. *Why was the Halls not graded outstanding?* Due to the state of the buildings, they were outdated. However, what the team provided for the students was outstanding, they performed the role of surrogate parents whilst at the College.

Resolved:

- i. **That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as reported.**
- ii. **That the Board approve the SAR and agree with its assessment of 'Good'.**

	<u>7.6 Safeguarding Report/Update</u> Confidential item	
8.	Governance/Link Report <u>8.1 Committee Chair Report</u> JF discussed the importance of having a full complement of governors to broaden the committee structures and support college understanding. She encouraged governors to participate in advisory boards, student events, and celebrations. Q. Were there particular skills required for the Board? Yes, these were shown on the Skills Matrix (within the papers provided), which was produced following completion of the Skills/Knowledge survey, which was conducted by the Director of Governance. It was noted that the Board was aware of the need to be more diverse. It was stated that a full complement of governors would make the Board stronger provided the right skills gaps were addressed and would ease the workload across the committees. <u>8.2 Governance Update including Succession Planning</u> The report aimed to update the Board on governance matters and to plan for appointments in a timely manner. The following was highlighted: • The current composition and membership of the College Board. • College Governor vacancies (four at the time of the meeting). • The memberships of the Committees - review needed owing to recent resignations from the Board and new appointments. AP to be added to F&R Committee and TH to be added to Capital Project Board. • An updated Scheme of Delegation was presented for approval. • A new Framework for Student, Staff and Stakeholder Voice was presented for approval. • Link Governor positions, with gaps noted – those not yet holding a position were asked to take up at least one role. • An updated Governance Action Plan – good progress was being made. • Training opportunities for governors. • An update on governors' attendance for the academic year 2025-2026 with the attendance target(s) for Board and Committees. NL stressed the importance of attendance/contribution at meetings and this had been highlighted in the recent FEC visit. NL presented an application from Tony Hawkins to become a potential College Governor; TH had met with members of the Governance and Search Committee at a 'Get to Know You' meeting, which resulted in the Committee recommending his appointment to the Board for an initial one-year term. Progress being made on filling the remaining vacancies on the Board were reported and acknowledged. The diversity on the Board was discussed and it was suggested that 'class' should be taken into consideration. It was felt that the College had a great diversity in this area, and this should be mirrored by representation on the Board. NL explained that it was being proposed to dissolve the SSMS Board (subsidiary company) as it was no longer separating fully from the College. Options on a way forward were to be presented to the SSMS Board in the summer with a recommendation to be brought to the Board for approval in July 2026.	

	Governors were reminded of the online ETF training course on 'Supporting Effective Risk Management' that had circulated to all governors. Governors were made aware that nominations for the Dr Winterbottom Fellowship were still being sought but at least one was expected. Resolved: • That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented. • That the Board approve the updated Scheme of Delegation. • That the Board approve the new Framework for Student, Staff and Stakeholder Voice subject to governor feedback being added. • That Tony Hawkins is appointed as a College Governor, initially for a one-year term of office, with immediate effect. • That the appointments to Committees as indicated above are approved. <u>8.3 Application of the College Seal</u> The members of the Board were informed that the College Seal had been used on four occasions since the last update. These were as follows: • Contract for sale of Land and Transfer document with Miller Homes • Sale of land to Freshwave at TyneMet • Building contract for Listed Building between Constellia, Castle and College • Sale of QA site to Lovells Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.	
9.	Consent Agenda <u>9.1 Policies/Procedures/Documents</u> Governors received the following documents for formal approval, which were deemed not to require further Board discussion having been scrutinised through Committee: • Fees Policy • Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy • Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Policy A governor raised a concern about governors not mentioned in the equality, diversity, inclusion, and belonging policy, which David agreed to review. <u>9.2 Minutes of the Committees of the Board</u> The following Committee/Task Group minutes were received by the Board: • Audit – 19 February 2026 • Finance and Resources – 12 March 2026 • Quality, Curriculum and Standards – 19 February 2026 • Governance and Search – 3 March 2026 • Business Development Committee – 5 March 2026 • Capital Project Board – 15 December 2025, 12 January, 16 February and 16 March 2026 • SSMS Board – 25 March 2026 Resolved: That the Board accept the reports, acknowledging the information presented. <i>BE left the meeting</i>	DG

10.	Any other business None.	
11.	<u>Feedback – FE Commissioner Visit</u> Confidential item	
12.	Dates and Times of Future Meetings The Board was reminded of the forthcoming Governor Development Event scheduled for Thursday 11 June 2026 at STC, Conference Room 3 from 12.00noon. Board Meeting 16 July 2026 at 4.00pm STC.	
13.	Identification of confidential items Resolved: That the Board agree that the following items should remain confidential: • Item 4.3 – Chief Executive Report (Finance Update & HR Update) • Item 4.5 – Estates Update including New Build • Item 5.2 – Risk Register – Risks and Issues • Item 6.2 – Management Accounts & Commentary • Item 7.3 – Quality Reports • Item 7.4 – SSMS Quality Report • Item 7.6 – safeguarding Report • Item 8.2 – Governor application(s) • Item 11 – FE Commissioner Feedback	

Chair: Date: