



TyneCoastCollege

Meeting of the Board

Venue: South Tyneside College/Teams (T)

Date: Thursday 18 December 2025

Time: 1.30pm – 3.30pm

Present: Malcolm Grady (in the Chair)
Doug Cole
Jim Dafter
Joanne Fanning
Gary Hindmarch
Clive Johnson
Nicola McCluskey
Rachael Taylor
Donya Urwin (T)
Eve Wedderburn (Student Governor)
Lindsey Whiterod (LWh)

Apologies: Neil Henry
Alan Nixon
Mark Turnbull

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)
Richard Spencer (DCO – Strategy, Infrastructure and Transformation)
Emilia Porter (Student President)
Neil Williamson (Ward Hadaway (part))
Neil Smith (Ward Hadaway (part))
Tony Lister (CEO Castle Construction (part))
David Hoose (Mazars (part))

ACTION TRACKER

Minutes

ITEM NO.	ISSUES	ACTION
1.	Apologies for absence The Board received and approved apologies for absence from those identified above after having first considered the reasons for their absence.	

	<p><u>1.1 Appointment of the Student Governor</u> EW was introduced to the Board then asked to leave whilst her position was considered. It was reported that the Chair and Director of Governance had a productive meeting with EW, discussing her understanding of the role and confirming her eligibility. The Board was recommended to endorse Eve Wedderburn's nomination from the Student Union as the Student Governor for Tyne Coast College.</p> <p>Resolved: That the Board endorse the appointment of Eve Wedderburn as Student Governor.</p> <p>EW returned to the meeting and was informed of the Board's decision. EW stated that she was looking forward to her role and contributing over the forthcoming year.</p> <p><u>1.2 Contracts and Associated Documents – (Ward Hadaway)</u> Confidential item</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Declarations</p> <p><u>2.1 Declarations of interests</u></p> <p>The Chair reminded members to declare any conflicts of interest as they arose on the agenda.</p> <p>There were standing declarations for links to Tyne Coast Academy Trust for the following: MG, LWh, GH, JD, CJ and JF.</p> <p><u>2.2 Business to be raised under Item 10</u> None</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Confirmation of the minutes of the Board</p> <p>The minutes of the meetings of the Board held on the 16 October, 28 October, 6 November and 15 December 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda</p> <p>As shown on the Action Tracker</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Strategic Matters</p> <p>With agreement from governors the Chair changed the order of business as follows:</p> <p><u>4.1 Performance and Salary review feedback of Senior Post Holders –</u> Restricted Confidential</p> <p>With the agreement of governors, this matter was deferred to the end of the meeting (Item 13).</p> <p><u>4.2 Chairs Update/Actions</u> Confidential item</p> <p><u>4.3 Report of the Chief Executive – part confidential</u> The CEO highlighted the Strategic Dashboard for critical analysis. The members of the Board found this additional extremely helpful for their review.</p>	

The impact of government policies on international students and the cost implications for the College was discussed.

Q. What cost impact (estimated) would this have on the College? Approx. £250k

Q. Regarding the Office for Students – Do we know how many Jewish Students attend the College? MIS were going to check; however, it was difficult to determine as it was via self-declaration. It was noted that Eamonn Murphy (Soft Services Manager / Safeguarding Lead - Halls of Residence) would complete further work around antisemitism.

The CEO gave an overview on the following areas:

- FE Curriculum update
- Marine School update
- IT Update

The Chair informed the Board that Tyne Coast Academy Trust was in a period of due diligence with GORSE Academies for a potential merger and would keep the Board informed of any developments.

The Board thanked the Senior Leadership team for undertaking the work around the New Build in addition to their 'day job'.

4.4 Estates Update including New Build

Confidential item

4.5 Presentation – Progress on New Build (Castle Construction - Tony Lister)

TL joined the meeting and introduced himself to the Board and Senior Leaders and expressed his gratitude for allowing him to attend the Board meeting and give a brief overview of the current situation of the New Build and forthcoming timelines.

TL delivered a presentation covering progress photos with explanations as well as drone footage which gave a real sense of the enormity of the project. It was expected that 100% of the steel work would be completed by Christmas. TL explained that £487k Social Value had been generated to date through the build and hoped to hit £1m by the Summer. It was noted that Tyne Coast College students had visited the site in the hope to inspire the next generation of electrical/mechanical engineers/quantity surveyors and architects.

TL answered questions from governors regarding the progress on the main build and the other 3 sites on the project.

Q. Rising costs of construction, how was that impacting Castle? Early engagement with sub-contractors and preplanning has helped along with the security of the guaranteed fixed price.

Q. Was there a report on social impact assessment? Yes, this was conducted monthly by an independent company called Believe.

Q. What were neighbour relationships like on site given the proximity to the adjacent businesses? Very good and welcoming the improvements to the town centre.

Q. When could the college start advertising the courses that will be available, what it's going to look like internally etc? The CEO stated once the College were in contract the hoardings would be put up with all stakeholders/funders listed, a QR code/general website would be advertised all linked by the College. As the project progressed more information would be shared.

NL suggested sharing the drone footage to staff and students on the main screens across the College.

Resolved: That the Board acknowledge the information presented.

	<p>TL was thanked for his presentation and left the meeting.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Audit/Risk</p> <p><u>5.1 Committee Chair Report</u> Statutory reports were scrutinised at Committee and recommendations had been brought forward to the Board for approval contained in the reports presented today.</p> <p><u>5.2 Risk Management Update</u> Confidential item</p> <p><u>5.3 Internal Audit Annual report (Internal audit annual opinion)</u> The COO presented the Internal Audit Annual Report, confirming that the internal auditors, RSM, were satisfied that the College had an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance and internal control. Some recommendations were made to enhance these frameworks, which the College has agreed to implement. Governors acknowledged the positive report and the clean bill of health, indicating strong internal controls and effective governance.</p> <p>The Internal Audit Annual Report was attached to the papers for information.</p> <p>Resolved: That the report is received and approved.</p> <p><u>5.4 Annual Report to Board from Audit Committee</u> The Chair of the Audit Committee (JD) presented the Annual Report from the Audit Committee, highlighting key areas for governors' consideration.</p> <p>It was explained that the Board was required to receive a report on the work of the Audit Committee (audit functions) on an annual basis before the signing of the statutory accounts.</p> <p>The Audit Committee had received the report and concluded that the information provided allowed them to recommend the signing of the statements of governance and internal control by the Chief Executive and Chair as part of the College's annual reports.</p> <p>Governors appreciated the thorough work of the audit committee and the positive outcome of the external audit.</p> <p>Resolved: That the Board agree to receive the report acknowledging the information provided.</p> <p><u>5.5 Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2024-25</u> This report was to inform governors of the work and evidence the College provided to the external auditors in order to carry out their work on regularity.</p> <p>The Regularity Audit checked that the College had used funds provided by the government for the purposes intended in the grant contract.</p> <p>This was carried out as part of the external audit process and the College provided the information to the auditors in the form of the completion of standard questionnaires. The COO requested that this be formally approved by Board and signed by the Chair of Governors and Accounting Officer.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the questionnaire had been discussed with the Audit Committee who recommend the questionnaire was approved.</p>	

	<p>Resolved: That the Board approves the questionnaire and that the Chair of the Board and Chief Executive are to formally sign the completed questionnaire.</p> <p>David Hoose (Mazars) joined the meeting.</p> <p><u>5.6 Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025 including Regularity Audit opinion and representation letter</u></p> <p>KR presented the Annual Report and Financial Statements, highlighting the key points such as the improvement in EBITDA, the decline in income and the significant investment in assets. It was reported that the accounts had been considered in detail by the Audit Committee, recommending their approval to the Board.</p> <p>The report showed a positive financial position with improved cash flow and solvency. DH from the external auditors, Mazars, confirmed a clean unqualified opinion on the financial statements and regularity audit. Governors appreciated the detailed report and the positive financial health of the College.</p> <p>There were a number of areas in the report that required the Chair’s and Accounting Officer’s signature; these were highlighted for information.</p> <p>Reference was also made to the Regularity Audit Opinion and Management Letters. Members recommended that the Letters of Representation from auditors (Management Letters) be signed on behalf of the Board.</p> <p>The Board thanked DH and the finance team for their hard work.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. That the Board agree to receive the report and acknowledge the information provided. ii. That the annual report and accounts for Tyne Coast College for the Year Ended 31 July 2025 are approved and that the appropriate persons, as identified in the papers, are authorised to sign the relevant sections of the documents on behalf of the Board. iii. That the Chief Executive is authorised to sign the Letters of representation from auditors. <p>David Hoose left the meeting.</p>	<p>MG/LWh</p> <p>LWh/MG</p> <p>LWh</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Finance/Resources</p> <p><u>6.1 Committee Chair Report</u></p> <p>CJ provided observations as Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, emphasising the importance of maintaining efficiency and financial resilience, especially with the ongoing capital build project. Governors were made aware of the improvements made in cash flow and expenditure reduction, as well as the new income stream coming into the Marine School. Governors acknowledged the positive developments and the need to continue monitoring financial performance closely.</p> <p><u>6.2 Student Union Accounts 2024/25</u></p> <p>The purpose of the report was to update the Board with details of the Student Union accounts results for 2024-25 and an overview of activity for the year.</p> <p>The discussion acknowledged the previous deficit in the student union accounts, with EP (Student President) expressing awareness of the financial resources needed. The Student Union was praised for its fantastic job despite the challenges.</p>	

	<p>Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.</p> <p><u>6.3 Management Accounts and Commentary</u> Confidential item</p> <p><u>6.4 Pay Award 2025/26</u> The purpose of the report was to discuss the pay award for 2025/26.</p> <p>The Board were aware that as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process a 4% pay award was built into the budget as approved for payment to be made from 1 August 2025.</p> <p>This aligned with the Association of Colleges recommendation of a 4% pay increase for further education (FE) staff for the 2025/26 academic year, provided that a College's financial circumstances and funding allowed.</p> <p>JC confirmed the pay award had been applied from 01/08/25 to all staff.</p> <p>Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Quality/Curriculum/Standards/Students</p> <p><u>7.1 Committee Chair Report</u> GH reported that all papers in the pack had been scrutinised by the Quality, Curriculum and Standards Committee (QCSC), highlighting the higher education self-assessment, noting both strengths and areas needing improvement. The further education self-assessment was also reviewed, with attention to the new Ofsted profile and areas requiring improvement.</p> <p><u>7.2 Student Union report</u> EW presented the student union report highlighted significant engagement and successful initiatives, including new student union memberships and projects across different campuses. The report emphasised the importance of student representation and the creation of safe environments for students.</p> <p>EW informed the governors that their main aim for students was that they felt Safe, Seen and Represented. The following were also highlighted:</p> <p>TyneMet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If approved a new Safe Reporting Centre would be initiated at TyneMet to collaborate with North Tyneside Police. • Working hard to embed EDIB within the Student Union <p>STC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working hard on a new project called 'Belonging & Welcoming' • Want to include student stories - Where have you come from and where are you going. The College has so much to be proud of and it needed to be shared. <p>Q. Have you worked with the Police (Alan Cox)? Yes.</p> <p>Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.</p> <p><u>7.3 Quality Reports – Overview</u> Confidential item</p>	

7.4 TCC Self- Assessment Reports 2024-25 (Quality Improvement Plans 2025-26)

Confidential item

7.5 TCC HE SER 2024-25

The purpose of the report was to provide a comprehensive review of Tyne Coast College's Higher Education provision for the academic year 2024-25.

It was noted that both the HE SER Working Task Group and the QCS Committee had scrutinised this document.

The report noted the following key highlights:

- Enrolment: 1,727 HE students enrolled (down from 2,341 in 2023–24 due to cessation of subcontracting), with significant growth in South Shields Marine School (+243 above target).
- Student Voice: surveys showed high satisfaction at induction (95%) and strong intellectual challenge (89%), but NSS scores remained below sector benchmarks for organisation and feedback.
- Attendance: Overall, HE attendance at 92% (+2 above target), though some departments (DPT16, DPT23) required improvement.
- Resources and Support: Strong satisfaction with specialist resources and mental health support; however, students requested better Wi-Fi, extended library hours, and dedicated HE spaces.
- Student Outcomes: Continuation and completion rates exceed OfS thresholds, but progression for parttime students (61%) and achievement in some departments needed improvement.
- Assessment: External examiners confirmed fairness and transparency but recommended more holistic and vocationally relevant assessment design and improved feedback consistency.

The report awarded the following grades to the Office for Students (OfS) conditions, with the overall grade awarded being Bronze.

- B1 Academic Experience: Bronze
- B2 Resources, Support & Engagement: Silver
- B3 Student Outcomes: Silver
- B4 Assessment & Awards: Bronze

Governors were delighted to hear that a cadet from the Marine School had been awarded the MCA National Cadet of the Year award and was being presented with the award at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London in the coming weeks.

Resolved:

- That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.**
- That the Board approve the Higher Education Self Evaluation Report (SER), as presented.**

7.6 Safeguarding Report

The purpose of the report was to update the Board on a termly basis of the safeguarding and prevent, detailing statistics/trends and concerns in addition to highlighting challenges and successes in the College's safeguarding procedures, referrals and processes.

The following were highlighted:

- Summary of Referrals
- Dr Winterbottom Trust Fund
- Main Challenges to date

- Safeguarding operations and capacity
- Prevent update

Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.

7.7 Equality and Diversity Report

The purpose of the report was to provide the Board an update on the College's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The key findings were:

- Workforce Data: The College has strengthened their approach to workforce monitoring, using data to identify gaps in representation and inform inclusive recruitment, retention, and development strategies.
- Learner Voice: Student feedback shaped EDIB priorities, with increased engagement through surveys, focus groups, and campaigns. Learners were actively contributing to shaping a more inclusive college environment.
- EDIB Awards: The College's first EDIB Awards Ceremony celebrated individuals and groups driving positive change. Awards recognised community impact, student champions of diversity and staff support for inclusion across campuses.
- North East Anti-Racism Coalition: Tyne Coast College joined the regional coalition to support anti-racism and anti-hatred efforts. Through events, campaigns, and shared learning. The College was contributing to a more inclusive North East.
- White Ribbon Campaign: The College launched its White Ribbon Steering Group and held its first awareness event, engaging students in pledges and discussions to challenge domestic violence and promote respectful relationships.
- Fitness to Study: The College reviewed and strengthened its Fitness to Study processes to ensure they were inclusive, supportive, and aligned with safeguarding and wellbeing principles.
- Further Information: Ongoing work included staff training, inclusive curriculum development, and targeted support for underrepresented groups. Resources, events, and communications continued to promote awareness and action across the College.

Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.

8. Governance/Link Report

8.1 Committee Chair Report

JF reported the following:

- Current Board members were encouraged to update their skills by undertaking relevant training offered by the governance team. It was also noted that governors could broaden their horizons by attending another committee as an observer to help understand the 'whole' governance structure and decision-making procedure.
- Any recommendations for future governors to become a member of the Board were to be sent to the Director of Governance in the first instance for initial contact.
- Dr Winterbottom nominations were to be logged with the Director of Governance by March 2026.

8.2 Governance Update including Succession Planning

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.

- Current vacancies on the Board (three) and that work had commenced on trying to fill these positions.
- Martin Alexander's resignation to the Board.
- Governors were asked to consider the re-appointment of five governors for further terms of office on the recommendation of the Governance and Search Committee:
 - Donya Urwin - Extn 3yrs
 - Clive Johnson - Extn 4yrs
 - Jim Dafter - Extn 3yrs
 - Rachael Taylor - Extn 3yrs
 - Michael Johnston - Extn 3yrs
- The membership of Committees and the need for places to be filled.
- The responses to the Board Performance Survey 2024/25 and further development strategies.
- The governance position paper 2024-25 (SAR) and the updated Governance Action Plan were being presented for consideration.
- A new Scheme of Delegation was being presented for approval.
- Dates of Stakeholder Advisory Boards were reported.
- Training undertaken and further training opportunities available.
- Governor attendance was highlighted at 77.15% which was an increase on the previous year. Governors were reminded of their attendance target.

NL informed the Board that the Governance and Search Committee had requested an extra meeting to be built into the annual calendar of meetings to be held in March each year. It was noted that G&S committee had requested a regular progress report on the Governor Engagement Strategy which had been accepted by the Board.

Governors' attention was also drawn to the new formatted Executive Summary cover, which now incorporated the principles of Good Governance and would be used for all reports as from the 1 January 2026.

The Chair commented that governance was a real focus within the new Ofsted framework having its own evaluation area 'Leadership & Governance', the FE Commissioner had already noted that there would be extra emphasis on governance arrangements and as a Board, should focus attention on external validation.

Governors discussed the report seeking clarification on several matters during their deliberations.

Resolved:

- i. **That the Board accept the report and acknowledge the information as presented.**
- ii. **That the Board approve the re-appointment of governors as recommended and listed above*.**
- iii. **That the Board approve the Scheme of Delegation, as presented, noting that a further update is to be given at the next termly Board meeting (April).**
- iv. **That the Doug Cole is to join the Governance & Search Committee and Business Development Committee with immediate effect.**
- v. **That the Board accept the Governance Position Paper, as presented.**

**Note: Each governor withdrew from the meeting during consideration of their own re-appointment taking no part in any discussion or voting.*

8.3 Project Governance

The purpose of the report was to provide a discussion document regarding governance arrangements with stakeholders on the new build programme.

To ensure stronger governance management of the new build project in relation to transparency and ownership of the project, a number of recommendations were outlined to the Board for consideration. It was noted that the College's Strategic Adviser had been consulted on the improvements being proposed.

Governors discussed the proposals presented.

Resolved:

- i. **That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.**
- ii. **That the Board approve the following:**
 - **The Joint Partnership Board (JPB) is to be renamed the Partnership Executive Board (PEB).**
 - **The Director of Governance is to be a member of the PEB and is to review and update the PEB's Terms of Reference with an emphasis that the College Board is the decision-making Body and service its future meetings.**
 - **The Chief Executive is to Chair each PEB meeting and approves the draft agenda and minutes in advance of circulation.**
 - **The membership of the PEB is to include the Chair of the Capital Project Board (CPB) and the Executive Director of Digital and Projects with the following acting in an advisory capacity only:**
 - ❖ **College Strategic Advisor**
 - ❖ **PMC Ltd**
 - ❖ **NECA representative**
 - ❖ **DfE representative**
 - **The schedule of meetings is to be reviewed to ensure the PEB is at the beginning of the project cycle.**

8.4 Ethical Conduct Policy

The purpose of the report was to advise governors of the proposed Ethical Conduct Policy. This policy was developed by the HR Team with support from the Director of Governance and scrutinised by the Finance & Resources Committee.

Governors noted that Colleges were required to have ethical conduct policies that established clear expectations for behaviour, ensure compliance with the law, and uphold the institution's reputation and integrity. These requirements generally stemmed from a combination of legal obligations (e.g., Equality Act 2010, Data Protection legislation) and sector-specific frameworks (e.g. College Financial Handbook, Managing Public Money).

Policies were built on core principles designed to foster a positive, safe, and respectful environment. These included:

- Honesty and Integrity.
- Respect for Individuals.
- Accountability and Responsibility.
- Transparency and Openness.
- Minimising Harm and Maximising Benefit.

Governors were welcomed to comment on the draft policy.

Resolved:

- i. **That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.**
- ii. **That the Board approve the Ethical Conduct Policy, as presented.**

	<p><u>8.5 Application of the College Seal</u> The Director of Governance reported verbally to the Board on instances where the College Seal had been utilised since the last Board meeting; these being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atkins Realis Consultant Appointment, Close out Agreement for AR and Professional Services Contract (20/11/25). • Campus Site Transfer Requirement, Deed of Variation, TR5 Form, Options Agreement and Land Transaction Form (10/11/25). <p>Resolved: That the Board accept the report acknowledging the information as presented.</p>	
9.	<p>Consent Agenda</p> <p><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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Financial Forecasting Return 2025-2027 • Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement • Annual Data Protection Report and Policy • Annual Report on Health and Safety and Action Plan • Health and Safety Policy • Safeguarding Policy • Financial Regulations Update • Final Outturn 2024-25 <p>Q. Did the College have insurance for data breaches? CS stated that he would investigate.</p> <p><u>9.2 Minutes of the Committees of the Board</u> The following Committee/Task Group minutes were received by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit - 11 December 2025 • Finance and Resources - 20 November 2025 • Quality, Curriculum & Standards - 27 November 2025 • Governance and Search - 13 November 2025 • Business Development Committee - 13 November 2025 • Capital Project Board - 13 October, 20 October and 17 November 2025 <p>Resolved: That the Board accept the reports, acknowledging the information presented.</p>	CS
10.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>None</p>	
11.	<p>Dates and Times of Future Meetings</p> <p>The Board was reminded of the forthcoming Governor Development Event scheduled for Thursday 22 January 2026 at STC, Conference Room 3 from 12.30pm.</p>	
12.	<p>Identification of confidential items</p> <p>Resolved: That the Board agree that the following items should remain confidential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 1.2 – Contracts and Associated Documents – (Ward Hadaway) • Item 4.2 – Chairs Update/Actions 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 4.3 – Chief Executive Report (Finance Update & HR Update) • Item 4.4 – Estates Update including New Build • Item 5.2 – Risk Management Update • Item 6.3 – Management Accounts & Commentary • Item 7.3 – Quality Reports • Item 7.4 - TCC Self- Assessment Reports 2024-25 (Quality Improvement Plans 2025-26) • Item 13 – Performance and Salary review feedback of Senior Post Holders (Restricted) 	
13.	Performance and Salary review feedback of Senior Post Holders Restricted Confidential Item	

Chair: Date: