

CHAIR APPROVED

**The Corporation of New College Durham**

**Minutes of the Corporation meeting  
held on 22 May 2025**

**Present:**

Stephen King (Chair)	Helen Golightly
Andy Broadbent	Rhiannon Hiles
Emily Baxter	Chris Patterson
Allen Eccles	Suzanne Slater
Ben Fisher	Hailie Warren

**Apologies:**

Davey Benson  
Mark Gomersall  
Jonathan Hamill  
Ross Markwell  
Kathryn McCloghrie  
Beatrix Murray-English  
Philip Pollard

**In attendance:**

Karl Fairley (Deputy Chief Executive)  
Alison Maynard (Deputy Principal)  
Paul Bradley (Chief Finance Officer)  
Colleen Peters (Vice Principal)  
Andy Stephenson (Vice Principal)  
Adele Dowson (Vice Principal)  
Peter Morrison (Vice Principal)  
Rob Grainey (Vice Principal)  
Caroline Winter (Head of Governance and Corporation Secretary)  
Chloe Freeman (Administrator)

**Action**

**25/33 Chair's introduction and starred items**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Construction Centre of Excellence, where the meeting was being held, and advised that it was planned to hold future Corporation meetings in other parts of the College estate to enable governors to see first hand the results of investment approved by the Board.

The Chair reminded members to declare their interests in any item of business to be discussed at the meeting. Ben Fisher declared an interest in Paper H1, appointment of Vice Chair.

It was noted that this was the last Corporation meeting for both student governors, Hailie Warren and Beatrix Murray-English, as their terms of office were due to expire on 30 June 2025. The Chair explained that Beatrix was unable to attend Corporation but that there would be a further opportunity to thank both students when they attended the Education Quality Curriculum and Students Committee meeting in June. The Chair asked that the Board's thanks for their contribution be placed on the meeting record.

Members confirmed they did not require any further discussion about the starred agenda items I2 and L.

*Suzanne Slater joined the meeting at 4.07pm.*

**25/34 Apologies for absence** were received from Davey Benson, Ross Markwell, Beatrix Murray-English, Mark Gomersall, Jonathan Hamill, Philip Pollard and Kathryn McCloghrie.

**25/35 Minutes of previous meeting (Papers A1, A2, A3)**

The minutes (including confidential minutes) of the meetings held on 27 March 2025 and 7 May 2025 were agreed as accurate.

**25/36 Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda**

25/17 – a review of implementation of the new Unsupervised Offsite Curriculum Activities Policy was scheduled for reporting to the October meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.

Confidential minutes:

25/07a – the response to the Sunday Times was included in the briefing paper attached to the Principal's report on the current agenda.

**25/37 Principal's Report (Paper B)**

The Principal briefed members about matters of strategic interest including clarification of DfE funding allocations announced earlier in the day relating to 16-18 funding, reduced OfS widening participation funding and the national insurance increase, alongside previous announcements on the Post-16 Budget Grant, Adult funding, T Level funding and the FE College Condition Capital Allocation. Members also noted that the outcome of a bid for further Bootcamp funding was expected the following day. Members were also updated on cyber security, ongoing collaborative work with the Durham Colleges Group and the Durham Learning Alliance, events and recent visits to the College including the very positive feedback received from both the FE Commissioner and the British Council inspection team.

*Rhiannon Hiles joined the meeting at 4.21pm.*

The Chair commented on the amount of activity the senior team were currently involved in and noted that whilst some of the funding announcements were disappointing it was reassuring to receive the briefing and there were very few surprises.

Members discussed the government approach on T Levels and potential impact on their sustainability. The challenge in digesting the various funding announcements in the College's financial modelling was acknowledged and members observed that the diversity of the College's funding streams provided a level of cushioning.

Members considered the high profile cyber attacks and emphasised the importance of ongoing Corporation support for

investment in the College's IT infrastructure which provided assurance that the necessary security was in place.

Members discussed the developments in relation to Technical Education Colleges (TECs) and asked what information was available about them and how the funding would be allocated. The Principal advised that the model was still being developed and the College was working to demonstrate the value of the existing Institute of Technology as a collaborative model relevant to the development of TECs. Members commended the College's efforts as part of the Durham Learning Alliance as a sector leading approach to collaboration between organisations in direct competition with each other, and it was felt this would pay future dividends for the College.

*Part of this item was recorded confidentially under minute 25/37a.*

Members agreed that whilst this had been a lengthy discussion it had been important to take the time to discuss the issues in detail and that appropriate assurance had been received.

**25/38 Receipt of Committee minutes and verbal reports from chairs (Paper C)**

**Audit and Risk Committee** – the Chair approved minutes (including confidential minutes) of the meeting held on 17 March 2025 were received.

**Education Quality Curriculum and Students Committee** – the Chair approved minutes (including confidential minutes) of the meeting held on 20 March 2025 were received.

It was noted that a verbal update had been provided from each Committee Chair at the previous Corporation meeting.

**25/39 Statement of Purpose (Mission, Vision and Values) (Paper D)**

Andy Broadbent presented Paper D. It was noted that the Statement of Purpose had been circulated to governors for comment following the recent Strategic Review. Whilst some comments had been received, there was no proposal to change the Statement at the current time, and it was proposed to consider the feedback as part of a full review alongside the new five-year strategy next year.

**Members agreed to re-approve the Statement of Purpose.**

**25/40 Accountability Agreement Statement 2025/26 (Paper E)**

Alison Maynard presented Paper E, the final draft of the New College Durham Accountability Statement (AA).

Alison explained that the AA was a public facing document and supported by more detail in the College's internal planning documents. Alison provided an overview of the key priorities set out in the document, emphasising in particular the ongoing work with employers to develop the curriculum, the increasing demand for softer 'human' skills and the progress made with the Durham Learning Alliance to look at provision across the County. Members noted that the document would also include progress made against the 2024/25 AA and that all objectives had been achieved. Alison confirmed that following Corporation approval of the content, the AA would be passed to the Marketing Team and the final designed version would be circulated to governors.

Members noted the collaborative work to review local needs in Durham and asked how this linked to other areas in the North East. Alison confirmed that the external consultants' report looked across the wider region to include Durham as well as its surrounding areas. Alison confirmed that the report would be shared with governors when available in a suitable format.

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Members asked what the College was doing to meet the needs of young people not in education employment or training (NEET). Alison acknowledged that this was not detailed in the AA, which had a significant focus on adult education, but confirmed that the College was working closely with Durham County Council to address concerns of an expected further increase in NEETs due to lack of funding. The Council had requested a meeting with DfE representatives to raise the issue, which was described as being at crisis point.

**Members approved the Accountability Statement for submission to the Department for Education, subject to comments arising from the discussion being reflected in the final version.**

#### **25/41 Students' Union Report (Paper F)**

Hailie Warren presented Paper F, the Students' Union (SU) report. Hailie advised that the report detailed headlines from the recent FE and HE Student forum meetings and that these would be covered in more detail at the June Education Quality Curriculum and Students (EQCS) Committee meeting.

Members noted updates on mental health week activities, which were supported by a range of different organisations, the strong and positive engagement across the College in the recent Eid celebrations, a visit from Prison! Me! No Way! to learn about life in prison from the perspective of both a prisoner and prison officer and the increase in student participation in enrichment activities compared with the previous year.

Members asked about Student Union provision by the College's HE partners and Peter Morrison confirmed that whilst partners had

their own SU, the College did liaise with them. In response to a question about the reason for the increased enrichment numbers, Hailie explained that in general there had been a greater use of social media to promote activities, MS Forms had been used to seek student views on the activities they wanted and the SU had tried to respond to this in the activities available. The range of new opportunities, flexibility in timing of sessions and greater student numbers this year had also been a factor.

Members thanked Hailie for her report.

## **25/42 Curriculum and Quality Monitoring Report (FE, Apprenticeships and HE) (Paper G)**

Alison Maynard presented Paper G, which outlined the key development and quality assurance activities across the curriculum up to May 2025.

Members noted progress on Further Education and Apprenticeships including the second achievement prediction exercise which forecast a continuation in the positive three-year trend. Concerns around student dropouts and attendance continued to be an area of focus and Alison highlighted the challenges for students leaving early to take up low paid low skilled employment and also the need to support a number of students with caring responsibilities. Members noted the positive progress in the maths curriculum following the work of the Steering Group and that the maths Self-Assessment Report (SAR) was being reviewed, with the hope that this would show improvement.

Members were updated on enhanced learning and asked about the reasons for low uptake of CPD sessions. Alison explained that participation in CPD was not mandatory and that this was being targeted to improve engagement. Members discussed the challenges on End Point Assessment (EPA) capacity and Karl Fairley advised that the College was exploring the potential to establish an EPA centre at the Construction Centre of Excellence and corporate and curriculum teams were working closely to provide a solution to the current issues.

Peter Morrison updated members on HE activities including the improved response rate to the National Student Survey, the recent poster exhibition, HE learning visits, the College's work to prepare for the new Office for Students (OfS) condition E6 on harassment and sexual misconduct and plans for Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) provision in 2025/26. Members asked about the College's approach to achieving 100% coverage in training staff and students on condition E6. Peter advised that this would be included as part of the induction process for students and mandatory training for staff.

#### **25/43 Appointment of Vice Chair (Paper H1)**

Ben Fisher left the meeting whilst members considered his nomination as Vice Chair.

**After due consideration, members approved the reappointment of Ben Fisher as Vice Chair for a further term of two years until 24 May 2027, subject to his term of office as a Member of Corporation.**

Ben returned to the meeting and members congratulated him on his reappointment.

#### **25/44 Appointment of Student Governors (Paper H2)**

Caroline Winter presented Paper H2, which confirmed that Matthew Gamsby had been elected to serve as Student Union President for the 2025/26 academic year and that Hayley Farrell had been elected as the second Student Governor.

**Members appointed Matthew Gamsby and Hayley Farrell as Student Governors until 30 June 2026.**

#### **25/45 Financial Monitoring to 31 March 2025 (Paper I1)**

Paul Bradley presented Paper I1, which detailed the financial position of the College at 31 March 2025.

Members noted the latest surplus position which had increased largely due to additional OfS Level 4 and 5 funding and Wave 6 Bootcamp income from Tees Valley Combined Authority.

In response to a member's question about high needs funding it was noted that the College recently met with the Council and this had been a very positive discussion.

Members noted the draft financial position to 31 March 2025.

#### **25/46 Financial Monitoring – Westfirst Limited to 31 March 2025 (Paper I2)**

Members received and noted the Westfirst Limited financial reports to 31 March 2025.

#### **25/47 Capital Projects Update (Paper I3)**

Paul Bradley presented Paper I3, which updated on the College's major capital projects.

Paul advised that work on the artificial grass pitch and car park was complete and the Community Use Agreement was now to be finalised. It was noted that the contractors had been advised of the decision to pause the Sixth Form and Sports Building project and

the position would be reviewed in six months. Paul updated that discussions were ongoing in relation to the new Business Development Unit property and in response to a member's question about the delay, Paul advised that the property agent had proposed some amendments to the lease.

Members noted progress on the Artificial Grass Pitch and Car Park Relocation Project, the current position on the Sixth Form and Sports Building and progress on the lease at Armstrong House.

## **25/48 Annual Review of Safeguarding and Prevent (Paper J)**

Karl Fairley and Andy Stephenson presented Paper J, the Annual Review of Safeguarding and Prevent.

Members noted the overview of activity in 2024/25 and that there had been a rise in concern events recorded compared with the same period the previous year. Karl explained that each of the peaks in volume of concerns reported at different times in previous years (September, November and March) had all been seen in the current year. The most reported concerns were classified as peer on peer abuse, threatening behaviour and bullying which indicated a change in student behaviour and Karl advised that there had also been an increase in homelessness being reported as a concern.

Andy Stephenson advised that there were now three years of safeguarding data in the MyConcern reporting system and this had prompted a change in approach to curriculum development in order to respond to emerging issues and needs. The College had a well-established Personal Development (PD) framework and regular meetings were held with the Head of PD to ensure a consistent response across the College to emerging issues that linked directly to the safeguarding concerns being seen. Members noted the College also had a well-established counselling team with no waiting list, which was an exceptional position when comparing with external provision. The College continued to work closely with external partners and across the North East colleges' Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) teams. Members noted the priorities for 2025/26.

Members commented on the significant increase in volume and complexity of student mental health issues and asked about the impact on and support for staff in dealing with them. Andy reiterated that there was a well-established DSL framework and process in place with clear routes for responding to issues, however it was noted that the impact often extended to senior managers often being drawn into issues to support Curriculum Managers.

The Student Union President highlighted the support for young carers referenced in the report and confirmed the establishment of a young carers group with links to an external network promoting opportunities for young carers to access support.

Members noted the report.

**25/49 Update from Careers Education and Guidance Governor (Paper K)**

Members reviewed and noted Paper K, which provided a termly update from Stephen King in his role as Careers Education and Guidance Governor, which had been deferred from the previous meeting. The report provided a current overview of careers education and guidance as well as recent events and activities at the College.

**25/50 Sub-contracting arrangements/fees policy 2025/26 (Paper L)**

Members received and approved Paper L, which updated on the changes to the College's Sub-contracting Fees and Charges Policy for the next academic year.

Members **approved** the Policy for the 2025-26 academic year.

**25/51 Skills and Employer Engagement Update (Verbal update)**

Members agreed to defer the update to a future meeting given the synergy of the content with the Accountability Agreement.

**25/52 Strategic Monitoring - 2024/25 Strategic KPI update (Papers M1 & M2)**

Members received and noted Papers M1 and M2, which updated on progress against the 2025/25 Strategic KPIs.

**25/53 Chair' Use of Delegated Authority (Paper N)**

Members reviewed and noted Paper N, which formally reported to the Board the decision taken by the Chair to authorise preparation of the lease of Armstrong House and to undertake due diligence on the property, subject to satisfactory survey and contractual agreement.

Members noted the Chair's use of delegated authority in respect of the premises at Armstrong House.

**25/54 Any other urgent business - none**

**25/55 Safeguarding and Prevent - Annual Training Refresher**

Karl Fairley delivered a refresher training session for governors on Safeguarding and Prevent.

The presentation emphasised the core principle of safeguarding being everyone's responsibility and covered the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Team, responsibilities of Governors

under Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024, the College's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk policy, key considerations for governors in discharging safeguarding obligations, advice from the Charity Commission, key changes to KCSIE guidance, Prevent and Martyr's Law.

**25/56** **Date of next meeting:** 3 July 2025