

SOUTH TEES DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BOARD

Date: Tuesday, 10 June 2025 Time: 14:00

Venue: Teesworks Skills Academy

Attendees:		Apologies:
Members		
Mayor Ben Houchen	Tees Valley Mayor (Chair)	Carole Morgan, Independent Member
Councillor Alec Brown	Leader Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council (Vice Chair)	John Baker, Independent Member
Carolyn Curr	Independent Member	Allan Armstrong, Independent Member
David Smith	Independent Member	Jason Faulkner, Independent Member
		Lyndsay Hogg, Independent Member
Associate Members		
John Barnes	Chief Operating Officer, South Tees Development Corporation	
John Sampson	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council	
Tom Smyth	City and Local Growth Unit	
Officers		
Gary Macdonald	Group Director of Finances and Resources	
Emma Simson	Group Chief Legal Officer	
Victoria Pescod	Legal Manager	
lan Craven	Head of Finance and Commercial	
Elaine Braham	Governance Officer	
Neil Young	Teesworks Skills Academy Development Manager	

No.	Agenda Item	Summary of Discussion	Actions Required	Responsibility
STDC 60/2024/25	Apologies for Absence	Apologies for absence are noted above.		
STDC 61/2024/25	Declarations of Interest	Cllr Alec Brown, Leader of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of South Tees Site Company and Board. Mayor Ben Houchen declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Audit and Best Value Notice recommendations. David Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of the Freeport Board. John Barnes declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 15. Gary Macdonald declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of TVCA.		
STDC	Minutes of	RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2025 were approved as		
62/2024/25	Previous Meetings	a true and accurate record, subject to the following amendment. Pg 7 to be amended to read The Leader of RCBC noted that STDC had chosen not to appeal the PD Ports judgement, however the private sector partners had chosen to appeal it. The Mayor advised that this has no impact on STDC, but believed that the private sector partners had now chosen not to continue on with this.'		
STDC	External Audit	The Board received a report from the Group Director of Finance and Resources		
63/2024/25	Statutory Recommendations May 2025	seeking acceptance of the recommendations under Section 24 Schedule 7(2) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, following receipt of a letter from the Board's external Auditors Ernst & Young LLP (EY).		

No. Age	enda Item	Summary of Discussion	Actions Required	Responsibility
		i. NOTES the content of the letter from Ernst & Young LLP; ii. ACCEPTS the four statutory recommendations and other actions as detailed in the letter referred to in (i) above and detailed in Paragraph 4 of the Report; iii. APPROVES the action to be taken to address the four statutory recommendations and other actions set out within the report at paragraph 8-10 and at Appendices 2-5; and iv. APPROVES the proposed reporting arrangements as identified in paragraph 21 of the report. The Group Director of Finance and Resources noted that the first paragraph of the cover report should read '2014' not '2024'. He explained that External Auditors can issue a letter at any point in time making recommendations, and four letters had been issued to South Tees Development Corporation (STDC), Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC) and Middlesbrough Development Corporation (MDC). In holding the public meeting today to consider this item, STDC were compliant in their responsibilities. Paragraph four of the report detailed the recommendations from EY. A Year End timetable had been developed to give confidence and assurance that STDC can meet its statutory deadlines for 2025/2026, aiming to upload the draft STDC Accounts and draft Annual Governance Statement on 30 June 2025, with the public inspection period commencing on 1 July 2025. Meetings are ongoing between the finance team and the auditors, and they are working with the STDC Chief Operating Officer (COO) to ensure that the support services being provided by the group are adequate and meet STDC's needs. This will be tracked until the statutory deadline date in November, as well as being overseen by the STDC Audit & Governance Committee. Formal updates will be provided to the Board as detailed in paragraph 21 of the report.	required	

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No.	Agenda Item	 The Board had the opportunity to ask questions: The Tees Valley Mayor asked if the Finance Team were on track for the 30 June 2025. The Group Director of Finance and Resources noted that whilst it had been challenging, the STDC accounts were done, and they were looking to consolidate these in to the TVCA accounts. The Tees Valley Mayor asked if there was a risk with regards to TVCA accounts, and if so, was there an implication for this Board. The Group Director of Finance and Resources advised that there was no implication for this Board as they would hit the 30 June 2025 deadline for the STDC accounts. An Independent Member asked if STDC were confident that they will meet the requirements of the Statutory Requirements letter in a timely manner. The Group Director of Finance and Resources advised that additional resources are in place whilst they undertake a fundamental review of the permanent structures across the group. The Tees Valley Mayor asked whether it was the case that STDC received a letter due to the shortage of capacity in the support services they are buying in from the group. The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that the auditors noted the problem within TVCA and felt that it followed through to the Development Corporations. The Tees Valley Mayor advised that the officers at STDC undertake an options appraisal, considering those options open to them and developing a best value model for moving forward. He noted that the Board needed to address the audit and be satisfied that STDC are not being impacted by capacity issues at TVCA, as well as being assured that TVCA have built in sufficient capacity, and that this the best option for STDC. He proposed that the STDC COO and the Group Director of Finance and Resources consider the options available and report to Board. The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland felt that this was important 		Responsibility
		 given that STDC have received an audit letter by proxy. The Group Director of Finance and Resources noted that this pertains to all support services provided to STDC by the group and not just finance. An Associate Member noted that the interim recruitment was shown in red, the Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that they had secured 		

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		 interim resources as a short term measure. The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked when they foresee this becoming permanent, and was advised that benchmarking is ongoing, and looking to September to sign off on the new structures. The Tees Valley Mayor noted that the report will go to TVCA initially, giving the COO time to review the provision of support services. RESOLVED: the Board: MOTED the content of the letter from Ernst & Young LLP; ACCPETED the four statutory recommendations and other actions as detailed in the letter referred to in (i) above and detailed in Paragraph 4 of the covering report; APPROVED the actions to be taken to address the four statutory recommendations and other actions set out within the report at paragraph 8-10 and at Appendices 2-5; and APPROVED the proposed reporting arrangements as identified in paragraph 21 of the report. 		
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STDC 64/2024/25	COO Report External Audit Statutory Recommendations May 2025	The Board received a report from the STDC Chief Operating Officer providing an update in respect of work undertaken to secure the necessary assurances from TVCA support services in response to the external audit issuance of recommendations under Section 24 Schedule 7(2) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2024. It recommended that the STDC Board:		
		 i. NOTES the STDC Chief Operating Officer approach to securing the necessary assurances from TVCA support services following the receipt of statutory recommendations from the external auditor. The COO noted that this follows on from the previous agenda item. An assessment of support services was to be undertaken and would report back to Board with a 		

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		recommendation on what this will look like moving forward, and will consider whether STDC finance should stand alone.		
		The Tees Valley Mayor noted the paper and asked that the COO undertake an options appraisal to be presented to Board. This should detail what has been explored and provide recommendations. The Board had the opportunity to ask questions and none were asked. RESOLVED: the Board NOTED the STDC Chief Operating Officer's approach to securing the necessary assurances from TVCA support services following the	COO to undertake options appraisal to present to Board	coo
		receipt of statutory recommendations from the external auditor.		
STDC 65/2024/25	Chair's Update	The Tees Valley Mayor advised that there were no further updates at this time.		
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STDC 66/2024/25	Best Value Notice and Improvement Plan Update	The Board received a report from the Monitoring Officer in respect of the Best Value Notice received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) on 3 April 2025. It expressed concerns in respect of four key themes, namely Governance, Culture, Partnerships and Continuous Improvements and requires the TVCA Cabinet to agree an overarching and holistic improvement plan within three months of the date of notice.		
		It recommended that the STDC Board:		
		i. <u>NOTE</u> the update.		
		The Group Chief Legal Officer reported that TVCA had undertaken listening workshops with Boards and Committees. Their comments had been fed in to the draft Organisational Improvement Plan which would be reviewed by the TVCA Audit & Governance Committee, Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Transport Committee prior to it being taken to Cabinet on 27 June 2025.		

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		The Tees Valley Mayor clarified that the Best Value Notice (BVN) had not been issued against STDC, however Board needed to be cognisant of it as they purchase services from TVCA.		
		The Board had the opportunity to ask questions:		
		 The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland explained that he had been tasked with providing a quarterly update to Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council (RCBC) in respect of STDC and asked if there was a report he could take to their Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Tees Valley Mayor felt that the STDC report to Cabinet could be amended for this purpose. The Group Chief Legal Officer explained that the RCBC Overview & Scrutiny Committee could request that someone from TVCA attend. The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland did not feel that this was needed. 	STDC report to Cabinet to be provided	coo
		RESOLVED: the board NOTED the update.		
STDC 67/2024/25	Group COO Update	The Board received a report from the South Tees Development Corporation (STDC) Chief Operating Officer (COO) detailing key activities since the last meeting.		
		It recommend that the STDC Board		
		i. NOTES the contents of the report.		
		The COO reported a delay in reopening of the trunk road due to ongoing cable work; but advised that this should not delay the opening of the park and ride facility.		
		The Tees Valley Mayor noted the CRST2 monies and asked that we recirculate to Board a list of projects this will cover. Whilst monies currently can not be drawn down until 1 April 2027, conversations are ongoing with Government in respect of potential earlier draw down for some key projects. The Board had the opportunity to ask questions:	Details of projects covered to be recirculated to Board members	coo
		The board had the opportunity to ask questions.	members	

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		 An Independent Member asked if there was more information available in respect of the ERF procurement. The COO explained that this was third party information, and the Leader of Redcar & Cleveland advised that RCBC had deferred the decision earlier in the day. The Tees Valley Mayor explained that in terms of overall project delivery this is not delayed, and an Associate Member advised that the contract will close in December 2025. The Tees Valley Mayor noted that neither TVCA or STDC are not involved other than to provide the land. RESOLVED: the Board NOTED the contents of the report. 		
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STDC 68/2024/25	Governance & Appointments	The Board received a report from the Group Chief Legal Officer detailing appointments and constitutional updates for agreement and confirmation by the Board.		
		Appointment to South Tees Developments Ltd		
		 Option 1 – <u>TO APPOINT</u> Mark Buttitta and/or Derek Weatherill as a Director[s] of South Tees Developments Limited; or Option 2 – <u>NOT APPOINT</u> Mark Buttitta [or] Derek Weatherill as a Director[s] of South Tees Developments Limited. 		
		The recommended option and reasons for this were set out in Paragraph 1 of the report and recommended Option 1 as the preferred option.		
		The Group Chief Legal Officer reported that South Tees Development Limited currently had two directors, one of whom would be standing down, and the report proposed the appointment of two further directors.		
		The Tees Valley Mayor clarified the recommendation from Officers, and it was confirmed that it was to appoint both.		

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		The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked who these people were, and the COO explained that Mark Buttitta is employed by STDL heading up the estate function and Derek Weatherill is employed by STDC as EHS Director and sits on a number of Boards.	·	
		RESOLVED : the Board approved the <u>APPOINTMENT</u> of Mark Buttitta and Derek Weatherill as Directors of South Tees Development Limited.		
		STDC Constitutional Amendments		
		 Option 1 – that the Board proposes to TVCA Cabinet that paragraph 5.3 of the STDC Constitution be amended to remove reference to Board members as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report; or Option 2 – that the Board does not propose to TVCA Cabinet that paragraph 5.3 of the STDC Constitution be amended. 		
		The recommended option and reasons for this were set out in the report and recommended Option 1 as the preferred option.		
		The Group Chief Legal Officer explained that the proposed constitutional amendment was to remove the requirement 'to include at least two of the voting board members who are also cabinet members of the Combined Authority. This was proposed as the Board would no longer be able to hold a quorate meeting once the Tees Valley Mayor steps down at the TVCA AGM on 27 June 2025. It was noted that whilst this will be discussed with Cabinet members, there is no intention to remove Cabinets oversight of the STDC Board.		
		The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked if this would have an implication for RCBC. The Chief Legal Officer clarified that the legislation states that there needs to be a seat on the Board for a member from RCBC, but this does not have to be the Leader.		
		RESOLVED: the Board <u>AGREED</u> the proposal to TVCA Cabinet that paragraph 5.3 of the STDC Constitution be amendment to remove reference to Board members as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report.		

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		South Tees Site Company Limited (STSC)		
		The Board were asked to <u>NOTE</u> the position with regard to the Directorship of South Tees Site Company Limited.		
		It was reported that one of the Directors of STSC had resigned.		
		RESOLVED : the Board <u>NOTED</u> the position with regard to the Directorship of South Tees Site Company Limited.		
STDC 69/2024/25	2024/2025 Outturn and Medium Term Financial Plan Update	The Board received a report from the Group Director of Finance and Resources setting out a financial budget for formal approval by the Board each year. The budget provides the financial framework within which the Corporation will operate, and was presented to and approved by the Board on the 18 July 2024. The report to Board presented the outturn against the 2024/2025 budget.		
		It recommended that the STDC Board:		
		 i. NOTES the outturn position for 2024/2025; and ii. APPROVES the update to the Medium-Term Financial Plan. 		
		The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that the report detailed the key outturns for the year 2024/2025. Key headlines were set out from paragraph 7 onwards, focusing on estate management budget, initially STDC's costs will be higher, but these will reduce as income grows from the site. The business rate assumptions are continuously under review to ensure that these are aligned, and there had been a slight improvement in reserves by around £1m (table 20).		
		The Board had the opportunity to ask questions:		
		The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland noted the earlier discussion around increasing support services capacity, and the Group Director of Finance and Resources advised that there are monies in the budget to purchase these.		

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		 The Tees Valley Mayor noted the development expenditure table, which details a projected reduction of £5m in land sales. It was noted these monies are not due to be paid until December 2025. The Tees Valley Mayor asked if the 5% variance in total expenditure was within normal tolerance. The Group Director of Finance and Resources advised that 5% is quite good, and noted the need to service the debt and the borrowing against the business rates element. They further asked what was being done to give confidence moving forward, and it was reported that from a financial perspective 5% tolerance on large capital costs is reasonable, but there is a need to ensure that we have mitigated all areas that can be. The Tees Valley Mayor asked how this would be achieved, and the COO explained that project managers are required to ensure that the variations are being managed, specifications and contracts are right, and we are designing out the requirement to have several contractors working on top of each other. The Tees Valley Mayor asked if STDC are confident this will improve moving forward and the COO confirmed that he was. The Tees Valley Mayor asked if they were concerned about the 5% variance and the COO was not and felt it was being tightly managed. RESOLVED: the Board NOTED the outturn position for 2024/2025 and APPROVED the update to the Medium-Term Financial Plan. 		
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STDC 70/2024/25	Treasury Management Strategy 2025/2026	The Board received a report from the Group Director of Finance and Resources presenting the STDC Capital and Investment Strategies for the financial year 2025/2026, incorporating within it the minimum revenue provision policy (Schedule 1).		
		It recommended that the STDC Board:		
		i. <u>APPROVES</u> the Treasury Management Strategies for 2025/2026.		

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		The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that fundamental borrowing is received through TVCA who manage this as part of the treasury management strategy. He noted that inflation is currently static and may influence interest rate projections. TVCA are working with Treasury Advisors looking at how they can utilise any flexibility they have as a public body, and potential deferments whilst they await revenue coming in. Once information is available this will be shared with Board.		
		The Board had the opportunity to ask questions:		
		 The Tees Valley Mayor noted that in 2018 the site was designated as a special economic area, legislation which allows STDC to retain 50% of the business rates. He noted monies are now starting to come through from SeAH, and asked what work had been done in respect of business rates for the whole of the South Tees area and ensuring that we are capturing our 50%. The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that the red line area is broader than the site, monies flow through RCBC and there is a baseline calculation which determines the monies due to STDC. The Managing Director of RCBC reported that STDC use a company called Liberator, and their report is factored in to the business rate calculation. The Tees Valley Mayor asked if it is in the STDC area would they flag this, and the COO confirmed that they would. An Independent Member asked if they monitor the amount of finance required to service debt, specifically in respect of monies coming in. The Group Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that scenarios are mapped around optioneering and business rates income. The Independent Member asked if they had an idea of the percentage for the site. The Group Director of Finance and Resources explained that this was much more highly leveraged, a review of risk had been undertaken, and this had been discussed with the auditors. The Managing Director of RCBC highlighted that options were locked in twenty years ago. 		

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		The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked if STDC would retain the business rates indefinitely, and was advised that this was for a fixed term only and needed to be managed through. RESOLVED: the Board APPROVED the Treasury Management Strategies for 2025/2026.	·	
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STDC 71/2024/25	Tees Valley Mayor Annual Review of South Tees Development Corporation	The Board received a report from the Tees Valley Mayor providing an update and annual review of the key activities at South Tees Development Corporation, in line with the recommendations in the Localism Act 2011 in respect of Mayoral Development Corporations.		
	Corporation	It recommended that the STDC Board:		
		i. <u>NOTES</u> the report and that a similar update will be presented by the Mayor to TVCA Cabinet in June.		
		The Tees Valley Mayor explained that the BVN identified that the Mayor should annually review the existence of the Mayoral Development Corporations, considering their ongoing work and whether there is a business need for them to continue.		
		The Board had the opportunity to ask questions and none were asked.		
		RESOLVED : the Board <u>NOTED</u> the report and that a similar update would be presented by the Mayor to TVCA Cabinet in June.		
STDC 72/2024/25	Regulatory Update Report	The Board received a report from the Group Chief Legal Officer presenting an update on a number of regulatory matters for South Tees Development Corporation.		
		It recommended that the STDC Board:		
		i. <u>NOTES</u> the content of the report; and		

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		 ii. ACCEPTS the recommendation of Paragraph 5 of the Report. The Group Chief Legal Officer advised that they would take the paper as read, and was happy to answer questions. The Chief Legal Officer highlighted that nine Freedom of Information (Fol) requests had had their deadlines extended and advised that they were undertaking a review to understand why, and to ascertain if there was a trend. The Board had the opportunity to ask questions: The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked if STDC received as many questions as TVCA Cabinet and it was confirmed that they are similar. The Chief Legal Officer noted that the Fol's received by STDC are more complex in nature. The Tees Valley Mayor asked how they decide which entity the Fol sits with, and it was explained that each entity has their own e-mail address. The Leader of Recar & Cleveland asked if it would be appropriate for STDC to have the same policy as TVCA in respect of public questions. The Group Chief Legal Officer to look at this. The Tees Valley Mayor noted the number of Fol's. It was explained that these are generally complicated and can include numerous questions. It was felt that this should be reflected in the data moving forward. The Group Chief Legal Officer reported that the Governance Team had worked tirelessly to get to where we are at and TVCA had recently published their Disclosure Log. RESOLVED: the Board NOTED the content of the report, and ACCEPTED the recommendation in paragraph 5 of the report. 	Group Chief Legal Officer to review Public Questions policy Breakdown of number of questions to be included in reporting	Group Chief Legal Officer Group Chief Legal Officer
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STDC 73/2024/25	Delegated and Urgent Decisions	The Board received a report from the Group Head of Legal Services providing detail in respect of all Urgent and Delegated Decisions taken since the last Board meeting.		
		It recommended that the STDC Board:		

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		 i. NOTES the exercise of an Urgent Decision in respect of the Chief Operating Officer undertaking the role of Head of Paid Service on an interim basis. ii. NOTES that there has been no Delegated Decisions made since the STDC Board Meeting held on 4 April 2025. The Group Chief Legal Officer advised that they would take the paper as read and was happy to take questions. The Board had the opportunity to ask questions and none were asked. RESOLVED: the Board NOTED the exercise of an Urgent Decision in respect of the Chief Operating Officer undertaking Head of Paid Service role on an interim basis, and that no further Delegated Decisions had been made since 4 April 2025. 		
OTEG				
STDC 74/2024/25	Required Changes to Head of Paid Services	The Chief Operating Officer left the meeting whilst the following item was discussed. The Board received a report from the Group Chief Legal Officer presenting an update on the position of the Group Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) role, and making a proposal for consideration in respect of a Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) of South Tees Development Corporation.		
		Options Available to the Board		
		(the two items were dealt with out of sequence)		
		2. <u>Discharge of the STDC's Head of Paid Service</u>		
		 a) To <u>APPROVE</u> the absorption of the statutory functions of Head of Paid Service into the current Chief Operating Officer role, creating a proposed STDC Chief Executive role; or b) To pursue further, the option to recruit externally for a role to discharge the Head of Paid service functions and in order to ensure that the statutory functions are discharged to <u>APPOINT</u> the current Chief Operating 		

No.	Agenda Item	Summary of Discussion	Actions Required	Responsibility
		Officer as Interim Head of Paid Service whilst options for external recruitment are considered.	·	
		The recommended option and the reason for this were set out in the report, which recommended 2(a) as the preferred option.		
		It was reported that following the redundancy of the Group CEO of TVCA, the statutory Head of Paid Service function needed to be filled. This was currently being undertaken by the current COO on an interim basis. The Board were presented with options to consider in respect of fulfilling the role on a permanent basis.		
		The Board had the opportunity to ask questions:		
		The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked if the salary would need adjusting accordingly, and it was confirmed that it did not need to change if it adopted these powers.		
		RESOLUTION : the Board <u>APPROVED</u> the absorption of the statutory functions of Head of Paid Services into the current Chief Operating Officer role, creating a proposed STDC Chief Executive role.		
		The Chief Operating Officer rejoined the meeting		
		1. Proposed amendment to Paragraph 6.1 of the STDC Constitution		
		 a) To <u>APPROVE</u> the proposed amendment to the STDC Constitution; or b) <u>NOT TO APPROVE</u> the proposed amendment to the STDC Constitution. 		
		The recommended option and the reason for this were set out in the report, which recommended 1(a) as the preferred option.		
		The STDC Constitution states that the Group CEX fills the role of Head of Paid Services, the proposal is to remove the Group CEX role to align with the changes in group structure.		

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		The Board had the opportunity to ask questions and none were asked. RESOLVED: the Board <u>approved</u> the proposed amendment to the STDC Constitution.		
STDC 75/2024/25	Jobs and Skills Presentation	 The Board received a presentation from Neil Young, Teesworks Skills Academy Development Manager. The Board had the opportunity to ask questions: An Independent Member asked if welding training was available in Redcar, and was advised that it would be in the future. The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked if the senior management at SeAH were all Korean. It was explained that they initially brought over 100 staff to upskill the local talent and numbers had now reduced to around 30. The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland asked what was meant by 'off site jobs'. It was explained that these are based in the region but not technically on site e.g. office jobs. The Tees Valley Mayor noted that the Tees Valley Net Zero Industry Scholarship is the starting point for sponsorships, and is a £1m investment. An Independent Member asked if there had been any female applicants for the 141 apprenticeships. It was confirmed that there had been, with interviews scheduled to take place once exams were over. Members asked if the presentation could be given to Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, this was agreed. The Leader of Redcar & Cleveland felt it would be interesting to know how many applications had been received from ex Steelworkers. 	Slides to be circulated to members Presentation to be given to RCBC	Governance Neil Young

The following items are exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

No.	Agenda Item	Summary of Discussion	Actions Required	Responsibility
STDC 76/2024/25	Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) Management Report	The Board received a report from the Chief Operating Officer presenting an update on the key EHS activities in relation to works currently being undertaken on the Teesworks site.		
STDC 77/2024/25	Date and Time of Next Meeting	Thursday 11 September 2025, 10:00		