

**Minutes of the Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body Meeting held 2:30 Wednesday 24 September 2025 Titanic Quarter Boardroom and via MS Teams**

**Governing Body Members:** Jacqui Dixon (Chair); Michele Corkey; Seamus McGoran; Rose Byrne; Tom Hesketh; Lauren McAteer; Janis Leaden; Michael McKernan; Sheena McKinney; Bill Montgomery; Yvonne Murphy; Michael Mearns; Alex O'Neill; Damian Duffy (Interim Principal and Chief Executive (IPCE); Sinead Sharpe; and Maurice Keady.

**Management:** Aidan Sloane, Chief Operating Officer (COO); Fiona Dempsey, Interim Director of Curriculum and Learner Success (IDCLS); Siobhan Lyons, Interim Director of Development and Partnerships (IDDP) and Paula Graham, Director of People and Culture (DPC)

**In attendance:**

**Secretary to the Governing Body: Jim Woods**

**GB01 25-26**

**Quorum, Apologies, Welcome, Conflicts of Interest, Notice of AOB and Leadership Culture**

**Quorum:** The meeting is quorate under the terms of Section 7 of the Standing Orders for the Governing Body V5 approved December 2024 (6 members, of which 3 must be appointed under Part II Paragraph 5a of the Instrument of Government).

**Apologies:**

**Welcome:** J Dixon welcomed members and those in attendance to her first meeting as Chair. She thanked, Michele Corkey as the outgoing chair and everyone for the excellent support that she has received when joining the Board.

A O'Neill's tenure as student representative has come to an end. Y Murphy as her mentor, conveyed the Governors' thanks for the very positive contribution she has made over the last year.

**Conflicts of Interest:** Participants reported no perceived, potential, or actual conflicts of interest under the terms of Section 8.1 of the Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body Standing Orders V5 approved by the Governing Body 11 December 2024.

**Gifts and Hospitality:** All participants must report the accepting / rejecting of Gifts and Hospitality in line with the Financial Management Policy for Belfast Met. GB10 24/25 18 Sept 2024.

**AOB:** None notified to date.

**Leadership Culture:** Chair noted our commitment to Governing Body Leadership Culture

*Creative and Courageous Conversation in an 'atmosphere' OR 'culture' of challenge and respect in line with our Code of Conduct*

**Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body**

Minute	Detail
<p><b>GB02 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025</b></p> <p>The Governing Body approved both the open and closed minutes of the Governing Body meeting meetings dated 25 June 2025; and approved publication of the approved minutes on the College website, to be actioned by the Secretary.</p>
<p><b>GB03 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising which did not feature on the agenda of this governance meeting.</p>
<p><b>GB04 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Governance Information and Guidance</b></p> <p>A final version of the schedule of meetings for 2025-26 was presented to members as part of the pack. Members asked that the Resources Committee meeting start at 3:00.</p> <p>The Secretary advised members that they must complete an annual conflict of interest online form. In addition, 6 items of mandatory training will need to be completed by Board members with a deadline of the end of October.</p> <p>Additional guidance issued by AFDM had been included in the pack and is contained under resources in decision time.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the information provided by the Secretary.</b></p>
<p><b>GB05 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Notification of change to the internal control environment an updated code of conduct has been presented.</b></p> <p>Members were advised that following ministerial approval it is likely that the college financial year will change from 31 July to 31 March. 2025-26 will be a transition year. The COO had explained the implications in detail at both the Resources Committee and ARAC. He had provided assurance that the College was prepared for the change.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the proposed change to the Colleges financial year.</b></p>
<p><b>GB06 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Chair's Business</b></p> <p><b>The Chair provided updates on</b></p> <p>(a) The chair informed members that she has had several positive opportunities to engage with the Department over the summer on strategic issues including the Strategic Plan and College Development Plan. This included a meeting with the Minister, and these are included on the agenda today for further discussion and approval.</p> <p>(b) Members were advised that some meetings with the Chairs of the other colleges and these meetings will be attended regularly by the Department in the future. She will attend a CEF meeting on Monday 8 October. The Colleges are still in the process of finalising the constitution for CEF and will bring this to the Governing Body for approval in due course.</p>

**Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body**

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	<p>She confirmed that several Pay Award Business Cases have been submitted to the Department for approval and the work of the sub- committees continues.</p> <p>The college Principals have developed a proposed comprehensive collaborative workplan and the Chair hoped to bring this to the next meeting of the Governing Body for approval.</p> <p>As part of the Chair’s induction she was pleased to attend 2 Committee meetings earlier this month – Quality and Curriculum and Resources and gained a most valuable insight into the work of these Committees.</p> <p>She had Chaired a meeting of the Chairs of each of the Committees and was pleased at the level of discussion, co-operation and feedback provided on a range of issues which are included in the agenda for our meeting today</p> <p>Records of the Accountability Meeting and the Public Sector Pay and Pay Remits were noted.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the information provided by the Chair.</b></p>
<p><b>GB07 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Interim Principal and Chief Executive’s Report</b></p> <p>IPCE outlined updates and fielded question on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions and Enrolment</li> <li>• Spending Review Submissions</li> <li>• Enhanced Investment Zone Update</li> <li>• Traineeship and Essential Skills Action Plans</li> <li>• Partner of Choice – Pre-Market Engagement</li> <li>• Workload Planning Implementation Guidelines</li> <li>• Staff Engagement</li> <li>• Castlereagh Strategic Outline Case</li> <li>• Project Boards for MEXIT and Castlereagh</li> <li>• Cyber Simulation Exercise</li> <li>• Safeguarding Process Review</li> <li>• Bank of America and Citi</li> <li>• Queen’s Anniversary Prize – City of Glasgow College Invite</li> <li>• Corporate Risk Workshop Update</li> </ul> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the update.</b></p>

**Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body**

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<p><b>GB08 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Updated Strategic Plan 2025-28</b></p> <p>The Governing Body approved the College’s Strategic Plan 2025– 2028 at its meeting on Wednesday, 25 June 2025. The approved Plan was subsequently shared with the Department for the Economy (DfE) on 4 July 2025 for consideration. Feedback from DfE was received on 13 August 2025.</p> <p>DfE commended the Plan as a well-presented and professional document, clearly articulating the College’s ambitions and aspirations. However, DfE provided points of feedback for further consideration prior to submission to the Minister for approval.</p> <p>College officers have reviewed and addressed the feedback received from DfE and now seek Governing Body approval of the revised Strategic Plan. Following approval, an updated version will be shared with DfE for Ministerial consideration. In parallel, the College will begin the creative design phase and develop plans for the formal launch of the new Strategic Plan at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body approved the Strategic Plan 2025-28 and the release of the report to DfE.</b></p>
<p><b>GB09 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Belfast Metropolitan College Draft Financial Statements 2024-25</b></p> <p>The resources committee had dedicated considerable time to scrutinizing the draft financial statement 2025-28.</p> <p>The COO reported that the Finance Report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 presents a favourable outturn, attributable to added DfE funding and controlled expenditure, with certain figures remaining provisional subject to audit. Prepared by the Finance team in consultation with relevant departments, the draft financial position is post the Actuarial and LPS valuation adjustments.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the positive set of annual accounts which are subject to audit scrutiny. They asked that their thanks be passed to the finance team.</b></p>
<p><b>GB10 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Estates and Sustainability Update</b></p> <p>This report prepared by the Chief Operating Officer (COO) detailed that the Estates &amp; Sustainability update provided the Governing Body (GB) with information on key estates projects and sustainability initiatives, including the Castlereagh SOC, Millfield PFI expiry and Climate Reporting.</p> <p>Members will be canvassed to join Project Board meetings on Castlereagh SOC, Millfield Reversion and Climate Reporting. A brief will be issued with the expression of interest.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the information provided and progress on delivery.</b></p>

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<p><b>GB11 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Updated CDP with Admissions Enrolment Update 2025-26</b></p> <p>Members were advised that the CDP is fully aligned with Belfast Met’s Strategic Plan 2025/26–2027/28, which sets out the College’s ambition to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College of Choice: Delivering innovative, high-performing programmes that meet the evolving needs of learners and employers.</li> <li>• Partner of Choice: Collaborating with industry, community, and government to deliver impactful outcomes.</li> <li>• Powered by People: Investing in staff to build a resilient, inclusive, and future-ready workforce</li> </ul> <p>Members were advised that the CDP supports the Minister’s Economic Vision and Programme for Government priorities, including increasing good jobs, promoting regional balance, raising productivity, and reducing carbon emissions. Members were advised that the College has increased enrolment targets in the CDP.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the updated CDP for resubmission to DfE</i></b></p> <p>A separate paper provided an update on admissions and enrolment for 2025/26, highlighting significant growth in applications and strong enrolment performance across key provision areas. The update supports Belfast Met’s strategic objectives of widening access, enhancing learner success, and ensuring financial sustainability. The report draws on data from the latest admissions cycle and aligns with the college’s commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to regional skills needs.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body noted the positive trends in admissions and enrolment, the alignment with strategic objectives, and the ongoing actions to address areas of risk and opportunity</i></b></p>
<p><b>GB12 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Updated Risk Register</b></p> <p>A cover, the risk register and detailed papers had been issued as part of the meeting pack. Members were advised that the risk register had been presented to the ARAC where it had been explained that one risk has been downgraded from black to amber in consideration of the lecturer dispute being resolved, while others were retained at the same score.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body approved the Corporate Risk Register Q4 2024/25</i></b></p>
<p><b>GB13 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Quality Improvement Plan</b></p> <p>Members were advised that the paper presents the August 2025 update to the Whole College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the Board of Governors’ review and approval had been presented to the CQE. The update fulfils a requirement from the Department for the Economy Quality Improvement Plan and directly supports the delivery of Belfast Met’s Strategic Plan</p>

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	<p>priorities. It has been reviewed by the CQE, ELT, SLT and Quality Development Team prior to submission.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body approved QIP, and the information provided by management.</i></b></p>
<p><b>GB14 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Reports from Secretary and Chairs of Committees</b></p> <p><b>(i) Secretary’s Report</b>  The Secretary presented a report on the skills matrix that has been compiled from the self-assessment exercise carried out by Board Members. The results indicate that a rich mix of skills is evident within the Governing Body. The skills matrix is being used as part of Governance self-assessment exercise and is likely to influence training and the strategy day scheduled for February 2026. It was underlined that it is a self-assessed process.</p> <p>The Secretary provided an update on recommendation emanating from the ICS review. On the 6 Generic recommendations all 6 are progressing. Of the 4 areas for improvement, 3 have progressed and one relating to benchmarking requires further work. In relation to those which are Belfast Met specific, one area for development, an annual review of the partnership agreement. An update in the recommendations and the item on partnership agreement will be considered at the November Board meeting.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the matrix report and feedback on ICS recommendations.</b></p> <p><b>(ii) ARAC - draft minutes presented.</b></p> <p>BM, as a chair for this meeting, reported that the normal business was conducted in relation to assurance business and Internal Audit activities. The strategic issues considered included the draft accounts and risk register which are items at today meeting. He reported that RSM the internal auditors had provided a very positive report, as had NIAO, demonstrating strong partnership working. Compliance was strong and a drill down into data breaches will be followed at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the ARAC committee.</b></p> <p><b>(iii) CQE Committee – draft minutes presented.</b></p> <p>TH, as chair, provided a detailed summary of the strategic matters that had been addressed at the committee including the CDP and QIP which appeared on today’s agenda. The committee had a deep dive on Belfast City Deal, which although a capital programme should create opportunities for employment. The committee also had a deep dive on a very positive set of A Level results which will be</p>

Minute	Detail
	<p>benchmarked against selective school. There had also been a focus on the activities of Learner Success in particular on Safeguarding.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the CQE committee.</b></p> <p><b>(iv) Human Resources Committee – draft minutes presented</b></p> <p>LMcA, as chair, provided a strategic oversight into several issues considered by the committee. She was pleased that M Corkey had rejoined the membership of the Committee. The pay settlement has had a positive impact on industrial relations and was reflected in the corporate risk register. The quarterly KPIs report presented a positive outlook. There had been a deep dive on absenteeism which reported that 76% of staff had no sickness absence. Although the college was now recruiting over the summer months the main risk to business related to recruitment and attracting the right skills in some areas of the curriculum. The key task of building the right structures with HR to support the business continues.</p> <p>The committee had reviewed their TOR and made changes in relation to the appendix 2 which set out the schedule of meetings.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the Human Resources committee.</b></p> <p><b>(v) Resources Committee – draft minutes presented</b></p> <p>S McG, as chair, provide an overview informing members that the early production of draft accounts had validated reporting throughout the year that finances were on target and within budget allocation. The accounts which are subject to audit, a n item at today’s meeting, presented a very positive picture. The Committee has spent equal amount of time on Estates and Sustainability, the request for governance in the project boards was expressed earlier. He had been assured that both services were on top of their brief and if anything, ahead of the game.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the Resources Committee.</b></p> <p><b>(vi) Minutes of the June round of Committees</b></p> <p>The committees have now approved the minutes of previous meetings which were presented at the last Governing Body.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body approved the release and publication of the minutes on the Web.</b></p>

**Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body**

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<b>GB15 25-26</b>	<p><b>Meeting Feedback</b></p> <p>Governing Body members were asked to reflect on their own contribution to the meeting through preparation and constructive challenge. The Chair established that the conduct of this governance meeting provided evidence of the Governing Body's commitments as set out at GB01 25-26 above.</p>
<b>GB16 25-26</b>	<p><b>Time and date of next meeting</b></p> <p><b>The next meeting will be held 26 November 2025</b></p>

*The Meeting ended at 16:45*

<b>Members attendance in person</b>	<b>Members attendance Via teams</b>
Jacqui Dixon	Michele Corkey
Seamus McGoran	Michael McKernan
Rose Byrne	Maurice Keady
Tom Hesketh	Alex O'Neill
Janis Leaden	Sheena McKinney
Lauren McAteer	
Bill Montgomery	
Michael Mearns	
Yvonne Murphy	
Sinead Sharpe	
Damian Duffy	