Governing Body

Minutes of the Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body Meeting held 2:30 Wednesday 25 June 2025 Titanic Quarter Boardroom and via MS Teams

Governing Body Members: Jacqui Dixon; Michele Corkey (Chaired this meeting); 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) (attended online); and Sinead Sharpe.

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: Mr D McDowell, Head of Learner Success for item GB79 24/25.

Secretary to the Governing Body: Jim Woods

GB67 24/25

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: Maurice Keady

Welcome: A warm welcome was extended to the new Chair Mrs Jacqui Dixon. In response Jacqui Dixon relayed she was delighted to join the Board and outlined her experience as a public servant.

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

approved

Minute	Detail
GB68 24/25	**Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March and 30 April 2025** The Governing Body approved the minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 31 March 2025 and the minutes of the open and closed meetings dated 30 April 2025; and approved publication of the approved minutes on the College website, to be actioned by the Secretary.
GB69 24/25	**Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2025 and 30 April 2025** There were no matters arising which did not feature on the agenda of this governance meeting.
GB70 24/25	**Governance Information and Guidance** There was no Governance information and guidance.
GB71 24/25	**Notification of change to the internal control environment an updated code of conduct has been presented.** The new Chair took up her position effective from 11 June 2025 and will be approved signatory with immediate effect. It has been agreed with DfE that Appraisal of members will be conducted by Michele Corkey who was the Temporary Chair during 2024/25.
GB72 24/25	**Chair's Business** **The Chair provided updates on** (a) The Secretary had provided with a link to Cyber Security Training aimed at Board Members. Given its status as a black risk on the risk register members were asked to confirm when they had completed the training, by emailing the Secretary. (b) J Dixon relayed that she has met M Doherty and L Watson DfE who outlined the minister's priorities. There is a consultation exercise on the new legislation on the provision for 16–18-year-olds. IPCE relayed that a sector response was being drafted. (c) M O'Neill will chair the CEF, Gordon Milligan has been appointed as the new convenor. Main priorities will be supporting College Union discussions on Workload planning, Pay parity and a refreshed framework for industrial relations. (d) As of today, the Skills matrix is complete bar one return. The Chair requested that the final return is submitted as a matter of urgency. The Governing Body noted the information provided by the Chair.

Minute	Detail
GB73 24/25	**Interim Principal and Chief Executive's Report** IPCE outlined the challenges being addressed by the college in relation to the pay settlement and the fiscal position. Transformational change is a topical issue at present with another VFM exercise being proposed for the sector by DfE. As we understand it L Watson, DFE, will be heading up the transformation change team. IPCE updated members on the partnership with Queens and details of the FE sector Leadership Development Programme. The Governing Body noted the update and commented that the paper provided a useful strategic update on both challenges and opportunities.
GB74 24/25	**ICS Board Effectiveness Review 2024** Members were reminded that ICS had presented a draft report at the last meeting. The final report took on board two points of feedback. The four main recommendations are being progressed and will be reported on at future meetings. The Governing Body noted the information provided and approved release of the report to DfE.
GB75 24/25	**Draft Strategic Plan** The IPCE reported that since the beginning of the year, the Executive Team has developed a new Strategic Plan 2025/26 – 2027/28 which maps the next chapter for Belfast Met. The College kicked off the process with a strategic planning workshop with Governors in February 2025 and a presentation and feedback on the First Draft plan from Governors in April 2025. Emerging strategic objectives and priorities, values and proposed strategic indicators have been identified and included in the Plan. The college concluded a stakeholder consultation process on the Draft on the 14th of June, the feedback of which has been considered and used to develop the Final Draft of the plan for Governing Body review. IPCE reported that the engagement with staff across all College campuses was constructive with a number of useful Q&A sessions chaired by IPCE. In addition, the draft plan was circulated across a range of other external stakeholders for feedback and information. To ensure that learners were kept informed on progress the Interim Director of Curriculum produced a short video which summarised the key content in the plan which was shared through college information systems. Members of the Governing Body remarked on the Venn diagram which summed up the college strategy so succinctly, ensuring both reference to learners and meeting the priorities in the Economic Strategy. Further work will be completed to develop additional operational targets, and the GB will receive regular reports on progress and impact moving forward. Governing Body thanked the executive for the very rigorous process, and considered and approved the College Draft Strategic Plan 2025-28. IPCE confirmed that plan would now be sent forward to DfE for consideration and any feedback will be taken on board before the formal launch in September 2025.

Minute	Detail
GB76 24/25	**Castlereagh SOC** COO provided an update to GB on developments with the Castlereagh Campus Strategic Outline Case, including an update on the application of the SOC methodology and the presentation of the Draft SOC, which has resulted in 5 options being short-listed from an original long list. The process will include engaging in workshops when the business case will be further developed, Members were assured that the final solution will align to the sustainable campus proposals. Given the volume of information available in the SOC, the Interim Chair suggested that it would be useful at some point in the process to have a more detailed workshop dedicated to the consideration of the short-list of options. The Governing Body approved the Strategic Outline Case to be progressed and submitted to DfE.
GB77 24/25	**Disposal of Riddell** The Riddell building, previously gifted to the College by the Education Authority, was vacated by the College in August 2017 as part of the consolidation of our SLDD / MLDD provision into our Millfield Campus. The property has remained vacant from this date and was earmarked for disposal by the College in our Estate Strategy 2022-32. The Governing Body approved proceeding with the disposal of the Riddell Building through the Department of Finance (DoF) 'Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property' procedures.
GB78 24/25	**Draft Budget to 31st March 2026** The COO took members through the background to the Annual budget 2025/26. He explained that preparation of College Annual Budget 2025/26 will align College Budget Year & DfE Allocation Year to 31st March year end. The paper which was part of the pack was previously fully discussed at the Resources Committee. The Governing Body approved the draft Budget for 2025/26 to allow college departmental budgets to be allocated in advance of the 2025/26 academic year.
   GB79 24/25	**At 3:45 D McDowell, Head of Learner Success and designated Safeguarding Manager joined the meeting.** **Annual Safeguarding Report to the Governing Body 2024/25** DMcD presented the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024/25 for formal recording at the Governing Body. The report conveyed an increase in referrals and cases. The safeguarding governor, S McKinney, had met the Head of Learner Success who is the College Safeguarding Manager and endorsed the report to the Governing Body. She also encouraged the Governing Body to understand the importance of Safeguarding as it provided critical support for the learners This area could benefit from a deeper dive by GB at some stage.

Minute	Detail
	The Governing Body Noted the Annual Safeguarding Report. **At 4:00 D McDowell and Mr McKernan left the meeting.**
GB80 24/25	**College Development and Quality Programme Q3 2024/25** The FE, HE reports and an update on Teaching and Learning had been debated at the Curriculum, Quality and Engagement Committee. The Governing Body noted the reports.
GB81 24/25	**Belfast Metropolitan College Performance Reporting Quarter 3** The financial results and CDP KPI monitoring reports had been presented and debated to their respective committees. The Governing Body noted the Q3 Monitoring Reports
GB82 24/25	**Corporate Risk Register Quarter 3** The Corporate Risk Register was considered and approved at the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee. Members were reminded that the register recorded risks up to 30 April 2025. The next risk register will show improvement in some of the higher rated risks. The Governing Body noted the risk register, and the information provided by management.
GB83 24/25	**Governance Programme 2024/25** The Secretary reported that there were three sections to the item. Verbal reports of Committees which the Chairs and the Secretary's report, Cycle 3 minutes which are still in draft which have been summarised in the verbal reports and Governance Housekeeping of Cycle 2 minutes which have been approved by committees. **SEV limited 13 May 2025** The Springvale Educational Village Board met on 13 May 2025 which was the final meeting for Seamus Dawson. J Woods has been registered as Secretary in Companies House. The CLC building has been developed into a shared services centre for Belfast Met. Outstanding bad debts are being reviewed and pursued. **Governance Report from the Secretary** A co-option to replace Mr Dawson whose maximum term had ended will be considered by the new Chair. In addition, there are currently three main projects which would benefit from a Governance input by way of representation at the formal meetings. The Skills Matrix will be used to assist in the selection. Representation is required on. (i) SEV Ltd (ii) Castlereagh SOC Project Board

Minute	Detail
	(iii) Reverting of Millfield from PFI Project Board **Curriculum, Quality and Engagement 3 June 2025** TH, as chair, provided a detailed summary of the matters that had been addressed at the committee including the student performance report, the business skills report, the activities of Learner Success update and a deep dive into the activities of the Academic and Continuing Education School. The mapping curriculum and business activities to twelve performance indicators linked into the College Development Plan as presented today had been discussed at length. **Human Resources Committee 9 June2025** LMcA, as chair, provided a strategic oversight. The Director of People and Culture had taken up post on 23 April 2025 and provided a report on her finding one-month in. A review of the annual report and Q3 performance reported was stepped through in detail. A discussion on work related stress ended in a request for further detail. A picture moving forward will be on a modernised people and culture strategy with associated KPIs. Looking forward the Human Resource Development strategy and alignment will focus on three pillars of Culture, Brand and Change. **Resources Committee 4 June 2025** S McG, as Chair, provided an overview informing members that for Q3 that finances were on target and within budget allocation. Both estates and IT had provided updates and KPIs are generally on track. No major changes were reported in terms of finance and resources for the current year. **Audit Risk and Assurance Committee 10 June 2025** BM, as a Chair for this meeting, reported that the normal business was conducted in relation to assurance business and Internal Audit activities. Updated guidance has been provided on the completion of the 2024-25 accounts. NIAO had presented their plan for 2024/25 accounts with a considerable increase in price being accounted for. A large part of the meeting was dedicated to compliance and risk. The Internal Auditors had provided emerging trends in audit focus both sector based and UK wide. The risk register to 30 April had been presented. **Governance Housekeeping** (a) Governance Programme 2024/25 Cycle 2 approved minutes were agreed to be released in the public domain. (a) AC32 24/25 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee date 11 March 2025 (b) RC41and 42 24/25 Resources Committee date 5 March 2025 (c) HR47 and 51 24/25 Human Resources Committee Date 10 March 2025(d) CQE62 and 63 24/25 Curriculum, Quality and Resources Committee date.

Minute	**Detail**
	The Governing Body noted information provided by the Committee Chairs and adopted the approved Committee minutes and approved publication of the approved minutes on the College website, to be actioned by the Secretary.
GB84 24/25	**Any Other Business** There was no other notified business.
GB85 24/25	**Meeting Feedback** 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 GB3724/25 above.

The Meeting ended at 16:25

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

Action List

GB68 24/25	Approved publication of the approved minutes	Secretary
GB72 24/25	Confirm completion of the Cyber Security Training	Members
	Sector response on provision for 16–18-year-olds	IPCE
	Outstanding Skills Matrix to be completed	Members
GB74 24/25	ICE effectiveness Report to be released to DfE	Secretary
GB75 24/25	Draft Strategic Plan to be submitted to DFE	IPCE
GB76 24/25	Castlereagh SOC to be submitted to DfE and arrangements made for follow up workshop with GB to work through short-list options	IPCE
GB77 24/25	Disposal of Riddell to be progressed	COO
GB79 24/25	Deep dive in to Safeguarding for Governing Body	Members
GB83 24/25	Co-option and membership to support working groups	Chair