

**Record of the Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body Strategy event held 1:00 Wednesday 29 April 2026
Titanic Quarter Boardroom and via MS Teams**

Governing Body Members: Jacqui Dixon (Chair); Seamus McGoran; Michele Corkey; Tom Hesketh; Lauren McAteer; Janis Leaden; Michael McKernan; Sheena McKinney; Bill Montgomery; Yvonne Murphy; Michael Mearns; Lioni Delgado; Damian Duffy (Principal and Chief Executive (PCE); Maurice Keady; and William Buckley

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

GB80 25-26

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

Quorum: The meeting was established as quorate under the terms of Section 7 of the Standing Orders for the Governing Body (6 members, of which 3 must be appointed under Part II Paragraph 5a of the Instrument of Government).

Apologies: Were recorded on behalf of Sinead Sharpe and Rose Byrne;

Welcome: J Dixon welcomed members and staff to the second Strategy Day in the 2025-26 calendar.

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.

Gifts and Hospitality: All participants were reminded that they must report the accepting / rejecting of Gifts and Hospitality in line with the Financial Management Policy for Belfast Met. None were recorded.

AOB: None notified.

Leadership Culture: Chair noted our commitment to the 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>GB81 25-26</p>	<p>Chair’s Business</p> <p>The Chair provided updates on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Reform of FE, which was launched on 14 April via ministerial announcement. The minister had met with the trade unions. (ii) D Duffy, B Montgomery and T Hesketh had joined the chair at a launch last Friday (iii) The chair had attended a partnership meeting with finance (iv) The Chair is a member of a sector group leading on work and wellbeing (v) A letter had been circulated on the College Audit and Risk Committee's role in relation to component accounts. A response has been issued. (vi) The Articles of Government were approved by DfE on 31 March 2026 <p>The Governing Body Noted the Chair’s Update.</p>
<p>GB82 25-26</p>	<p>Estates Reconfiguration Programme (ERP) and Strategic Outline Case (SOC) options</p> <p>COO took members through a series of detailed presentations, including the better business case framework. He reiterated that the college had moved from a single-site approach to a whole-college approach. The college had welcomed the very positive input from DfE, which had assisted in the college arriving at the scoping stage for proposals and set the way forward for the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOC).</p> <p>The Governing Body agreed on the following consolidated objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Strategic Skills Delivery and Campus Specialism to align with the College’s strategic plan, namely, linked to the College’s role in delivering priority skills, supporting employers, engaging and optimising provision across sites (ii) Capacity, Progression and High-Quality Learning Environment (iii) Financial Sustainability and Climate Responsibility <p>Members concurred that this provided a clear strategic lens, strengthening the case of rationalisation and optimisation rather than expansion alone, whilst supporting a robust approach to affordability and sustainability. It was agreed that it would enable a clearer articulation of benefits and outcomes for stakeholders.</p> <p>Based on a prolonged discussion, members agreed to discounting two options (iv and v) both of which involved site closure. The options are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) BAU (do nothing) (ii) Castlereagh Maintenance upkeep (do minimum) (iii) Maintenance upkeep of building 3 and 5. (iv) Campus closure and East Belfast relocation (v) Divest of the site and increase the capacity of other sites (vi) Reduce Vacate and Consolidate (vii) Redevelop and consolidate <p>The Governing Body approved the revised spending options and the shortlist of options to develop SOC.</p>

Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body

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<p>GB838 45-26</p>	<p>Draft Budget 2026-27 Scenario Planning</p> <p>COO stepped members through a detailed paper on budget scenarios which listed three viable options. He relayed that the college was already in its financial year and had little or no opportunity to avail of exit costs.</p> <p>The Governing Body approved the adoption of a 5% reduction to establish a baseline budget for 2026-27.</p>
<p>GB84 25-26</p>	<p>DfE Tribal Benchmarking</p> <p>P&CE took members through the Tribal outcomes from 2022-23, explaining that since that exercise, the College had taken steps to address some of the areas highlighted. He explained that statistics can, at times, hide mitigating circumstances such as, the different socio-economic challenges that each college area faces.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the forthcoming benchmarking exercise.</p>
<p>GB85 25-26</p>	<p>Fit for the Future</p> <p>P&CE took members through a DfE presentation on Further Education Fit for the Future. He explained that a 5-strong team had been established in DfE with a view to ensuring alignment between FE Curriculum and economic needs.</p> <p>The team are hoping to make progress on four fronts within the next 18 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Curriculum Framework (ii) Performance Framework (iii) Funding approach aligned to performance (iv) Collaboration and Empowerment Programme. <p>The Governing Body noted the information and suggested that it should be an item on future meetings.</p>
<p>GB86 25-26</p>	<p>Update on Year End Assurance Statement</p> <p>A full copy of the response had been furnished to members with the papers.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the year-end assurance statement.</p>
<p>GB87 25-26</p>	<p>Meeting Feedback</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</p>

Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body

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	<p>of this governance meeting provided evidence of the Governing Body’s commitments as set out at GB80 25-26 above.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the volume of papers and the use of covers to extract vital information. On review the balance seems about right.</p>
GB88 25-26	<p>Time and date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be 24 June 2026</p>

The Meeting ended at 16:35

Members attendance in person	Members attendance Via teams
Jacqui Dixon	Michael McKernan
Lauren McAteer	Yvonne Murphy
Lioni Delgado	Sheena McKinney
Bill Montgomery	Mauriece Keady
Tom Hesketh	
Janis Leaden	
Michele Corkey	
Michael Mearns	
Damian Duffy	
Seamus McGoran	
William Buckley	