

**Minutes of the Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body Meeting held 2:30 Wednesday 25 March 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); Sinead Sharpe; Rose Byrne; 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

**GB58 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 V5 approved December 2024 (6 members, of which 3 must be appointed under Part II Paragraph 5a of the Instrument of Government).

**Apologies: None**

**Welcome:** J Dixon welcomed Damian Duffy to his first meeting as permanent Principal and Chief Executive.

**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 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><b>GB59 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025 and 4 February 2026</b></p> <p>The Governing Body approved the minutes of the meetings held on 26 November 2025, and the minutes of the strategic event and meeting held on 4 February 2026.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body approved the minutes, which were duly signed.</b></p>
<p><b>GB60 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025 and 4 February 2026.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Minutes of previous meeting forwarded to DfE and placed on the website.</li> <li>(ii) While COI was complete, Secretary is to follow up on the policy training.</li> <li>(iii) The sector-wide effectiveness report had been forwarded to DfE</li> <li>(iv) Governors appointed to project boards had met with the COO for an initial briefing</li> <li>(v) Approved minutes are on the College website</li> <li>(vi) SOC objectives to be revised considering the Governing Body strategy output.</li> </ul> <p>There were no other matters arising which did not feature on the agenda of this governance meeting.</p>
<p><b>GB61 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Governance Information and Guidance</b></p> <p>The Secretary thanked members for the quick turnaround in approving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the CEF constitution in December.</li> <li>(ii) Amendments to the articles in March</li> </ul> <p>The Department have confirmed by email that the changes to the articles have been agreed, and the seal applied. As a result, the college financial year will now move from 31 July to 31 March, applying to the current financial year.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the information provided by the Secretary.</b></p>
<p><b>GB62 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Notification of change to the internal control environment.</b></p> <p>The cover letter from NIAO was issued as part of the pack of papers. The move to a year-end on 31 March 2026 was now in place.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the certification of accounts for 2024-25 year and the change in financial year end, effective 2025-26</b></p>

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<p><b>GB63 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Chair's Business</b></p> <p>The Chair provided updates on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) In DfE J Scallon has taken up the position of FE Director,</li> <li>(ii) L Watson is the interim Dep Secretary.</li> <li>(iii) The chairs of colleges have met with J Scallon, who has a background in Secondary Education</li> <li>(iv) L Watson is still leading on Transformation</li> <li>(v) CEF workstreams are progressing with constructive input from the Trade Unions.</li> <li>(vi) The Accountability meeting was very positive; a summary of the minutes will be issued when received</li> </ul> <p><b>The Governing Body Noted the Chair's Update.</b></p>
<p><b>At 2:45 Rose Byrne joined the meeting</b></p>	
<p><b>GB64 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Principal and Chief Executive's Report</b></p> <p><b>P&amp;CE provide a comprehensive report and field questions, highlighting the following salient points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The revised budget allocation for the year ending March 2026 has risen to £54.6m but Uncertainty and pressures regarding the 2026/27 budget year, not yet known.</li> <li>• Feedback on the College Strategy Plan was approved by Minister and information included on the agenda with recognition of the work we have supported for BRCD</li> <li>• The Principals Group have been shaping up some ideas for the FE Reform process working with Chairs of GBs</li> <li>• P&amp;CE and DCLS are leading on the sectoral curriculum piece</li> <li>• Proposals prepared to support Defence Apprenticeship Development and Growth Programme</li> <li>• USEL and College collaboration is being actively explored to support new DfC/DFE Pathways to Work Programme</li> <li>• The level one offer has increased</li> <li>• Skill for Life and work is being separately addressed</li> <li>• New TQ Careers space has been developed to support enhanced engagement with employers</li> <li>• Admissions, the college had the busiest open day ever. UCAS pilot is showing encouraging increase in diversity of HE applications</li> <li>• Employee of Choice supported with 500 attending staff development days</li> <li>• Learning Development programmes are being well received</li> <li>• Met life new inhouse news bulletin provides an insight into life at the college</li> <li>• Good response to Culture Audit feeding into the new People and Culture framework. Over 60%4% had completed the Cultural Audit Survey</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme of work ongoing through CEF on HR policies and workload agreements helping to build more positive relationships with trade unions</li> <li>• A new approach is being developed to employer engagement which will be underpinned by College CRM and work of a dedicated employer engagement team</li> <li>• Best practice examples of external collaboration cited</li> <li>• Assured Skills continues, childcare example cited</li> <li>• Bank of America courses and their contribution to marginal learners</li> <li>• NIPS SLA negotiations are underway</li> <li>• Digital by Design AI showcase with lecturers via Microsoft led to first graduation ceremony with other cohorts to follow</li> <li>• Climate Change Action plan submitted to DAERA to meet statutory obligations</li> <li>• Accountability meeting focused on open conversations with DfE</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> Met Life to be circulated to Board Members            Pathways to work document to be circulated to Board Members            Share summary of accountability meeting minutes when available</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the comprehensive update.</b></p>
<p><b>GB65</b> <b>25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Belfast Metropolitan College Strategic Plan update</b></p> <p>The minister's approval for the strategic plan was circulated to members. Members noted the positive feedback.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted that the strategic plan 2025-29 had been approved.</b></p>
<p><b>GB66</b> <b>25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Belfast Metropolitan College Summary Financial Report to 31 December 2025</b></p> <p>COO presented an overview explaining that both ARAC and Resources had received the paper, which presented the college finances as being in a strong position, with a prediction of coming in on budget at year-end.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the financial statements to 31 December 2025.</b></p>

Minute	Detail
<p><b>GB67</b> <b>25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Belfast Metropolitan College Performance Reporting Quarter 3</b></p> <p>IDCLS and IDDP jointly reported that the CDP is a statutory requirement under Article 20 of the FE Order 1997. It was explained that the report had been considered at CQE Committee. The Board were advised that a new marking scheme had been applied to the report, which provided a more balanced assessment.</p> <p>The current position is that the college is on track to deliver 4 of the 13 KPIs, data will be available by year-end to measure 2 KPIs and 7 KPIs marked as amber are currently being tracked. It was explained that the 7 KPIs will remain amber until such time as 95% of the target is achieved.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the report and the actions regarding meeting the targets.</b></p>
<p><b>GB68</b> <b>25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Estates and Sustainability Update</b></p> <p>The report prepared by the Chief Operating Officer (COO), detailed that the Estates &amp; Sustainability update provided the Governing Body with information on key estates projects and sustainability initiatives, including the Estates Reconfiguration Program, Millfield reversion from PFI, and Climate Reporting Regulations. COO, having met representatives on a one-to-one basis, welcomed the involvement of Governors on the project boards and looked forward to their input.</p> <p>An update on the ERP will be the focus of the strategy event on 29 April 2026.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted the information provided and progress on delivery.</b></p>
<p><b>GB69</b> <b>25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Corporate 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 and recommended by ARAC.</p> <p>The Q2 2025-26 Corporate Risk Register identifies ten high-level risks, including a new risk, relating to HR/ Payroll system changes and an updated score for enrolment and SEN support. All risks have been reviewed by ELT, with controls and mitigations monitored to ensure effective oversight.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body approved the Corporate Risk Register Q2 2025-26</b></p>

Minute	Detail
<p><b>GB70 25-26</b></p>	<p><b>Reports from Secretary and Chairs of Committees</b></p> <p><b>(i) Secretary’s Report</b></p> <p>The Secretary presented the summary report which brings together all the actions emanating from the strands of the governance effectiveness review. All the actions have been ragged as green bar one relating to benchmarking with other public sector bodies.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted progress on the actions arising from the individual and sectors reports.</b></p> <p><b>(ii) Schedule of meeting 2026-27</b></p> <p>The schedule remains, bar a change to one date in February 2027. The dates will be populated on Outlook diaries and Decision Time.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body Note the schedule of dates for 2026-27</b></p> <p><b>(iii) ARAC - draft minutes presented.</b></p> <p>BM, as chair, reported that the normal business was conducted in relation to assurance business and Internal Audit activities. He drew members' attention to the unqualified audit report for 2024-25, provided by NIAO. The Committee were assured that a sector-wide issue in the treatment of depreciation of assets will be resolved for the 2025-26 accounts. The main business from the meeting covered the finance report, and the compliance and risk report has also formed a substantive item on today’s agenda. Three outstanding audit recommendations are being actively addressed. The Committee were assured that the internal audit work will be completed by May 2026, allowing a perspective on the accounts. NIAO have agreed to commit to meeting the account audit programme.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the ARAC committee.</b></p> <p><b>(iv) 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 KPIs, which appeared on today’s agenda. In a deep dive into A-level results with a focus on AS performance. There had been a packed agenda which included the CPD,</p>

Minute	Detail
	<p>Quality, Business Skills and a Learner Services presentation explaining what they do, and why they do it. The Committee valued their presentation and their contribution tremendously.</p> <p>An item on the curriculum build was truly fascinating with FE continually evolving to drive economic growth. An inclusive agenda was also discussed, including the expansion of level 1 to widen entry eligibility. CQE had approved the QIP, Traineeship action plan and Essential Skills action plans, and noted the SEN as specific action in response to ETI feedback.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the CQE committee.</b></p> <p><b>(v) Human Resources Committee – draft minutes presented.</b></p> <p>LMcA, as chair, provided a summary of the Human Resources Committee business. The dual focus of the meeting had been on progress against the operating plan for Powered by People Strategy presented by CPC and Kathryn Mallon. The other was the Culture audit and baseline, which will be underpinned by the employee survey. The item was presented by Neil Hughes from Grant Thornton. As of today’s Governing, Body meeting, a 64% survey response rate has been achieved, which will be complemented by focus groups. In relation to risk, the HR system has reached end of life in terms of support and has been added to the risk register. An alternate system is being sourced as part of a sector-wide solution. The KPI report and sector-wide progress had also formed part of the papers.</p> <p><b>The Governing Body noted draft minutes and the report from the Human Resources committee.</b></p> <p><b>(vi) Resources Committee – draft minutes presented.</b></p> <p>SMcG, Chair of Resources, COO presented the minutes to the Governing Body. The Q3 performance was very strong; it was detailed as a separate item at today’s meeting. COO reported that since the last meeting, the college has been informed that a bid for additional financing has been successful. He informed members that a robust expenditure plan was in place. The Committee had spent some time on Climate change reporting. The Chair outlined his admiration for the work being undertaken in the IT and Digital space. At times, we take for granted the uptime and responsiveness of the IT support, which is to be commended.</p>

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Minute	Detail
	<p><b>The Governing Body noted the draft minutes of the Resources Committee and the Chair's Report.</b></p> <p><b>(vii) Approval to release the approved minutes of the Committees</b></p> <p><b>The Governing Body approved the release and publication of the minutes on the Web from the November series of meetings and the February Governing Body.</b></p>
<b>GB71 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 GB58 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>
<b>GB72 25-26</b>	<p><b>Time and date of next meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting will be:</p> <p>Strategic meeting 29 April 2026 a Strategic Focus booked for TQ</p> <p>Normal business cycle at 2:30 on Wednesday 24 June 2026</p>

***The Meeting ended at 16:25***

<b>Members attendance in person</b>	<b>Members attendance Via teams</b>
Jacqui Dixon	Sinead Sharpe
Lauren McAteer	Yvonne Murphy
Lioni Delgado	William Buckley
Bill Montgomery	Mauriece Keady
Tom Hesketh	Sheena McKinney
Janis Leaden	Michael McKernan
Michele Corkey	
Rose Byrne	
Michael Mearns	

## Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body

Damian Duffy	
Seamus McGoran	

### Action List

<b>GB64 25-26</b>	Met Life to be circulated to Board Members	JW
GB 64 25-26	Pathways to Work Briefing to be circulated to GB Members	JW
GB 64- 25-26	Copy of Accountability Minutes to be Circulated to Members when available	JW
<b>GB68 25-26</b>	An update on the ERP will be the focus of the meeting on 29 April 2026.	JW
<b>GB70 25-26</b>	The dates will be populated on Outlook diaries and Decision Time.	JW
GB70 25-26	Approved minutes of Committees to be published on the college website	JW

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: 24 June 2026

J Dixon MBE