

**Belfast Metropolitan College Governing Body 1:45pm Wednesday 31 March 2025 Titanic Quarter Boardroom and via MS Teams**

**Governing Body Members:** Michele Corkey (Chair); Seamus McGoran (Vice-Chair); Rose Byrne; Seamus Dawson; Tom Hesketh; Maurice Keady; 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)

**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)

**In attendance:** Louise Watson and Moira Doherty, DfE and Andrew Clarke ICS

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

**GB37 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:** Sinéad Sharpe was recorded as an apology.

**Welcome:** A warm welcome was extended to Moira Doherty DFE, Louise Watson DfE and Andrew Clark, ICS.

**Conflicts of Interest:** There were no perceived, potential, or actual conflicts of interest declared under the terms of Section 8 of the Belfast Metropolitan College Standing Orders for the Governing Body V5 approved at **GB81a 21/22 22 June 2022**.

**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*

(GB51 24/25 Meeting Feedback below refers)

Minute	Detail
<p><b>GB37 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>The Head of Skills and Education DfE and the Director of Further Education DfE addressed the Governing Body Meeting</b></p> <p>Moira Doherty, the Head of Skills and Education, outlined the strategic issues facing the sector including Public Spending, the Skills and Labour Gaps, AI and the demographics. Louise Watson homed in on the role that Colleges face in supporting the economy, citing specifically collaboration, the overlap with the education eco system and the budget settlement. The block grant to the sector in 2025-26 is less than that secured last year. Like all arm’s length bodies, the pressure of honouring pay rises within a reducing budget is proving challenging for colleges.</p> <p>Members relayed that as employers they were placed in a position where they are not able to make a pay offer outside of this financial year. If, as a result of industrial action, learner outcomes are impacted, then the college will fail on its strategic aims. In the absence of three-year budget planning cycles Governing Bodies within colleges are faced with drastic decisions, for example closing estate to remain within budget allocations. For Belfast Met on back of previous efficiencies and reform to save this was now beginning to create operational risks</p> <p>The Chair assured members that they were meeting the minister on Wednesday, and that task and finish groups were looking at workload aspects of contracts as part of wider conversation around terms and conditions</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the information provided.</p> <p><i>At 3:05 M Doherty and L Wason left the meeting.</i></p>
<p><b>GB38 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024</b></p> <p>The Governing Body approved the minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 11 December 2024; and approved publication of the approved minutes on the College website, to be actioned by the Secretary.</p>
<p><b>GB39 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising which did not feature on the agenda of this governance meeting.</p>
<p><b>GB40 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Governance Information and Guidance</b></p> <p>The Governing Body <b>noted</b> the provision of guidance on relation to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) IoD Code of Conduct for Directors / Institute of Directors:</li> <li>(ii) Availability of effectiveness training resources</li> <li>(iii) The updated Guide for Governors refreshed 13 March 2025</li> </ul>

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Minute	Detail
	<p>The Governing Body approved the use of the skills matrix which had been presented with the papers and committed to completing a copy of the matrix which will be issued after meeting.</p> <p><b>Andrew Clark. ICS, joined the meeting at 3:05</b></p> <p>Andrew Clark, ICS, thanks everyone involved for their openness and engagement in compiling the report. He reflected that the report confirmed that there were no major issues with governance and that the recommendations were effectively tweaks to current processes.</p> <p>The Governing Body thanked Andrew Clark for the positive feedback and undertook to provide written comments on the draft report with two weeks.</p> <p><b>A Clark, ICS, left the meeting at 3:25</b></p>
<p><b>GB41 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Notification of change to the internal control environment an updated code of conduct has been presented.</b></p> <p>The Secretary has drafted updated code of conduct to reflect the new partnership agreement and the updated Articles and Instrument of Government. The code had been screened through the equality impact assessment process.</p> <p>The Governing Body approved the new code of conduct which is to be signed by each member.</p>
<p><b>GB42 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Chair's Business</b></p> <p><b>The Chair provided updates on</b></p> <p>(a) The training including the session on constructive challenge which had been delivered prior to the meeting today. A brief will be drafted as a reminder and for those not present.</p> <p>(b) Engagement with DfE has been ongoing including last week's strategic event which the Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of CQE had attended.</p> <p>(c) The IOD session on the post-mortem event on the post office scandal hosted by Belfast Met had been excellent.</p> <p>(d) CEF engagement is ongoing on a collaborative basis.</p> <p>(e) A Chairs Charter is in the process of being drafted through the PSCF.</p> <p>(f) Chairs of FE Colleges are meeting the Minister on Wednesday regarding lecturer pay award and ongoing concerns around the risk of ASOS.</p>

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	<p>(g) Members had been updated on the pay award by email following the Department releasing a statement into the public.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the information provided by the Chair.</p>
	<p><b>Interim Principal and Chief Executive’s Report 31 March 2025</b></p> <p>IPCE outlined the challenges presented to the college in relation to the budget, pay settlements and potential industrial action. The matters will be discussed further under risk register. IPCE gave an outline of progress on the College strategic plan 2025-28 around a college of choice, partner of choice and powered by people. He explained that sustainable by nature and digital by design activities would also underpin all parts of the strategy alongside a framework for curriculum refresh and reform. IPCE agreed to share SL piece in the Bank of America newsletter with Governors for information on progress with Digital Exclusion Programme.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the update and commended the pitch which was a strategic level.</p>
<p><b>GB44 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Plan Update</b></p> <p>The presentation provided the Governing Body with an update on progress to date and the initial design concepts related to the development of the new Strategic Plan 2025-2028. The full draft of which will be presented to the Governing Body meeting on the 30th of April for consideration and feedback before going out to wider consultation with a view to finalizing in June and formally launching in August. The IP&amp;CE and ELT previously presented on this matter as part of the strategic planning event with the Governing Body in February, this presentation is to provide an update on progress since then and to set out the next steps and timeline to allow for full review of the full draft strategic plan by the Governing Body.</p> <p>Members advised that while the economy was at the centre of the diagrams that the economy was not within the Colleges gift. Some suggestions provided bringing the Learner and Economy together. Following drafting and approval of the DRAFT in April the plan will be subject to consultation with stakeholders before finalization in June.</p> <p>GB members asked that any comments collated during GB strategy event in February are considered as part of the drafting process.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the information provided.</p>
<p><b>GB45 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Business and Apprenticeships</b></p> <p>This paper provided Governing Body with an update and overview of the Belfast Met Apprenticeship Activities. It also provided details on a proposal to join the Business Promise accreditation programme operated by Belfast City Council.</p> <p>Governing Body noted the contents of the report and approved the College to commence engagement on Membership of the Belfast Business Promise.</p>
<p><b>GB46 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Performance reporting Quarter 2</b></p>

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	<p>Members were taken through the financial results for January 2025 which had been presented to both the Resources, and the Audit Risk and Assurance Committees. The paper covered very positive key income and expenditure variances, cash monitoring, capital expenditure and Forecasting income and expenditure to the year end.</p> <p>Members were taken through the Curriculum KPI report which has been presented at the Curriculum, Quality and Engagement Committee. The report which summarised performance of delivery and planned activity at the third review point for 2024/25 Academic year. Members noted the RAGGED report which for the most part was green.</p> <p>Governing body noted the content of the reports.</p>
<p><b>GB47 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Development and Quality Updates</b></p> <p>The Quality Report provided a synopsis of detail which had been discussed at the Curriculum, Quality and Engagement Committee. It provided members with details on validations, approvals, quality, evaluations and progress on Mark book.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the information provided and the impact for Belfast Met.</p>
<p><b>GB48 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Corporate Risk Register Quarter 2</b></p> <p>Following review and discussion at the ARAC meeting, the Governing Body considered the Corporate Risk Register which identifies the key risks facing the College and that all management action in the form of mitigating controls is effective.</p> <p>In particular, the Governing Body are asked to consider Risk 2: <i>Failure to meet enrolment targets and deliver quality outcomes</i>. This Risk was discussed in detail at the ARAC meeting and the potential impact on the College. The risk score has increased from an amber to a red risk following receipt of correspondence of TUs concerning dispute declaration and possible ballot on strike action following failure to negotiate on pay award and workload discussions. At the ARAC Committee it was agreed that the Governing Body should consider that this risk moves to a 'Black-rated' risk based on the likelihood and severity of impact. The result of the ballot was received during the Governing Body meeting with over 98% of the members voting for industrial action short of a strike.</p> <p>The Governing Body considered risk register and specifically Risk 2 Failure to meet enrolment targets and delivery of quality outcomes. The Governing Body approved risk 2 to be classified as black given the severity of the impact and limits on mitigating actions ELT confirmed that a Business Continuity Team had already met to consider the challenged around withholding grades as part of ASOS.</p>
<p><b>GB49 24/25</b></p>	<p><b>Governance Programme 2024/25</b></p> <p>Each of the Committee Chairs provided a detailed update focusing on the oversight of strategic themes, scrutiny of Q2 reports, consideration of relevant risks and approval of terms of reference. The draft minutes of the first cycle of committee had been issued with the papers.</p>

Minute	Detail
	<p><b>Curriculum, Quality and Engagement 11 March 2025</b>            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 Belfast Business School. The mapping curriculum and business activities to 12 performance indicators linked into the College Development Plan as presented today had been discussed at length. The risk discussion for curriculum had been limited to challenges securing placements with employers.</p> <p><b>Human Resources Committee 10 March 2025</b>            LMcA, as chair, provided a strategic oversight in relation to being an employer of choice relaying that the Director of People and Culture will be taking up post on 23 April 2025. A detailed review of the annual report and Q2 performance reported was conveyed. It was pleasing that the level of applications for positions were increasing but the backlog on recruitment was still challenging. The main risk change perceived by the committee relates to industrial relations aligning to the ongoing pay negotiations.</p> <p><b>Resources Committee 5 March 2025</b>            SD, as chair, provide an overview informing members that for Q2 that finances were on target and remarked on the improved budget allocation. A consolidated report structure was very well received by the committee. Both estates and IT had provided updates and that KPIs are generally on track. While no major changes reported in terms of finance and resources for the current year were reported, a closed session looked at the challenges and impact of the 2025-26 allocation.</p> <p><b>Audit Risk and Assurance Committee 12 March 2025</b>            SMcG, as a chair, reported that the normal business was conducted in relation to assurance business and Internal Audit activities. Guidance has been provided on 2024-25 accounts. Internal audit had reported on two reports one of which notably had no recommendations. A large part of the meeting was dedicated to the risk register with increases in relation to next year's allocations and the concerns arising with the implications to trying to deal with budget pressures and meeting affordability concerns around pay offer. The matters had been discussed under GB48 24-25 above.</p> <p><b>Governance Housekeeping</b></p> <p>(a) Governance Programme 2024/25 Cycle 2 approved minutes were agreed to be released in the public domain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. AC17 24/25 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 18 Nov and 10 Dec 2024</li> <li>ii. RC15 24/25 Resources Committee 5 November 2024</li> <li>iii. HR15 24/25 Human Resources Committee 2 December 2024</li> <li>iv. CQE15 24/25 Curriculum, Quality and Resources Committee 4 December 2024.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>
GB50 24/25	Any Other Business

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<b>Minute</b>	<b>Detail</b>
	There was no other notified business
<b>GB51 24/25</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 GB3724/25 above.</p>
<b>GB52 24/25 Date of Next Meeting</b>	<p><b>Governance Programme 2024/25</b></p> <p>A Governing Body Meeting will be held 30 April 2025 to approve the latest draft of College Strategic Plan 2025-28 at Titanic Quarter and via Microsoft Teams to allow it to go out for further consultation. GB members will still have the opportunity for further input and feedback on the DRAFT before it is finalised after consultation closes in June.</p> <p>Governance Programme 2024/25 the fourth meeting of the Governing in 2024/25 will be held on 25 June 2025 at Titanic Quarter and via Microsoft Teams</p>

***The Meeting ended at 17:08***

Members attendance in person	Members attendance Via teams
Michele Corkey	Sheena McKinney
Seamus McGoran	Yvonne Murphy
Rose Byrne	
Seamus Dawson	
Tom Hesketh	
Janis Leaden	
Lauren McAteer	
Michael McKernan	
Bill Montgomery	
Michael Mearns	
Alex O’Neill	
Maurice Keady	
Damian Duffy	

Ref	What	When	Who
GB38 24/25	Arrange to have agreed minutes published	1 April 2025	Secretary
GB40 24/25	Skills Matrix to be issued to members	1 April 2025	Secretary
GB40 24/25	Feedback on ICS draft report in terms of accuracy	14 April 2025	Members
GB41 24/25	New Code of Conduct to be signed by members	30 April 2025	Members
GB42 24/25	Brief on Constructive Challenge to be drafted	14 April 2025	Secretary
GB43 24/25	Section by SL in Bank or America newsletter to be shared with Governors	14 April 2025	IDDP
GB45 24/25	Join the Belfast Promise	30 April 2025	IDDP

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GB48 24/25	Risk Register to be upgraded to reflect Risk 2 Failure to meet enrolment targets and delivery of quality outcomes being moved top black	1 April 2025	COO
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Minutes approved at the Governing Body meeting 25 June 2025

Approved