



Minutes of the Search & Governance Committee Meeting held on Monday 20 October 2025 at 3pm via Teams

Present: Janet Gater (*Principal*)
Mick Martin (*Foundation Governor*)
Rob Peacock (*Foundation Governor*)
Helen Stevenson (*Foundation Governor*) – Chair

In attendance: Ruth Potter (*Clerk*)

The Chair opened the meeting in prayer.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Declarations of interest

Attendees were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter which formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at this meeting. Mick Martin had an interest in item 2.5.

1.2 Apologies for absence

All members were present. The meeting was declared quorate.

1.3 Items to be included under urgent business

None

1.4 Minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 19 May 2025 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair in accordance with Article 12 (3) of the Articles of Government. The publication of the minutes was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.5 Matters arising from the minutes (*previously circulated*)

Committee members noted the action log prepared by the Clerk.

1.6 Committee Risk Register

The Clerk reported that there were currently no risks on the updated Risk Register that were attributed to the Search & Governance Committee for oversight.

2. GOVERNING BODY REVIEW

2.1 Governing Body attendance 2024-25 (*previously circulated*)

The Committee considered the two separate reports which had previously been circulated, namely:

- Attendance Figures 2024-25 – this report provided overall attendance statistics for all Full Governing Body (FGB) meetings and all Committees.
- Attendance data relating to individual Governors and Associate Members during the last academic year.

It was noted that the average attendance rate across all governance meetings during the year was 75% (2024, 87%). This represented a significant reduction compared to 2024 and was 7% below the benchmarked average attendance rate of 82% identified by the annual survey of FE and Sixth Form Colleges. Key factors impacting overall attendance throughout the year were highlighted alongside individual attendance statistics. It was noted that the two Governing Body members with the lowest attendance rates were no longer on the Board.

Concern was expressed at the reduced attendance rate and the importance of consistent attendance for effective governance was highlighted. It was agreed that monitoring would take place throughout the year to ensure any attendance concerns were addressed as early as possible.

In the meantime, it was agreed that the attendance report would be updated to separate out the attendance data for Special Full Governing Body meetings – of which four were called during the course of the year to deal with ad hoc urgent matters – as distinct from the four scheduled Full Governing Body in-person meetings.

Resolved:

- **That the Governing Body Attendance Report be received and noted.**

ACTION – Update attendance report to show attendance rate with and without Special FGB meetings.

2.2 Skills Audit 2025 (previously circulated)

The Committee considered the anonymised analysis of the skills audit undertaken in September 2025. The Clerk indicated that the response rate from Governing Body members was 94% (2024, 100%). It was noted that none of the areas had resulted in an average score below three, hence no significant skills/experience gaps were identified.

The collective depth and breadth of the Board's professional qualifications and experience was acknowledged. In terms of potential gaps, additional skills and experience in the areas of HR, digital technology and law were identified as desirable to strengthen the overall skills set.

Resolved:

- **That the Skills Audit Report be received and noted.**

2.3 Governing Body training and development annual review (previously circulated)

The Clerk referred members to the Governing Body training log for 2024-25 which recorded all the training and development activities undertaken by board members during the year. A range of activities was noted, including in-house training such as governor induction sessions, safeguarding and prevent updates, briefings delivered prior to governor meetings, and external briefings such as Sixth Form College Association (SFCA) governance webinars. A summary of this activity would be included in the financial statements in line with reporting requirements.

Members' views on the draft Governing Body Training and Development Plan for 2025-26 were invited. The proposed plan, prepared by the Clerk using evidence from the skills audit responses and 1-2-1s with the Chair, included:

- mandatory training – Safeguarding, EDI
- additional bespoke training
- ongoing training opportunities – SFCA Governance Webinar Programme, ETF Governance Development Programme, and Eversheds Education Webinar Programme.

Plans for the mandatory EDI training session were discussed and it was agreed that rather than a generic overview, a more focussed session would be useful picking up on British values and current socio-cultural responses to key issues. It was agreed that the Principal would explore her professional networks to identify a suitable training provider.

Governors' suggestions for additional bespoke training were invited and it was agreed that a session on the Catholic Inspection Framework in the Summer Term would be useful preparation for governors given that an inspection was expected during 2026-27.

Resolved:

- **That the Governing Body training and development log for 2024-25 be received and noted.**
- **That the Governing Body training and development plan for 2025-26 be approved subject to the agreed updates.**

ACTION – Update training and development plan for 2025-26 and arrange EDI training and Catholic Inspection Training.

2.4 Governing Body EDI annual review (previously circulated)

The Clerk referred members to this anonymised report which was based upon data collected from Board members in September 2025. The report also provided comparative and benchmark EDI data from:

- Students (based on 2025 enrolment data)
- St Helens Local Authority area (based on 2021 census data)
- FE Governor Workforce data for sixth form colleges (based on 2023-24 academic year)

Key insights into the data were noted with regard to board composition as determined by five key protected characteristics: gender, ethnicity, disability, age, and religion and belief. In addition, for the first time, data was reported on the socio-economic background of Governing Body members.

Discussion ensued on areas of underrepresentation when comparing the Board composition against relevant benchmarks. EDI priorities for the year ahead were discussed and confirmed as follows:

- Increase female representation on the Governing Body
 - Increase ethnic minority representation on the Governing Body
- Strategies and networks to support improvements in these areas were discussed. It was suggested that whilst there were no vacancies at present, appointments to the role of Associate Member could be considered as a means by which to involve more women and people of ethnic minorities in the governance of the College.

The Governing Body EDI annual review would be fed into the whole College EDI report in the Spring Term.

Resolved:

- **That the Governing Body EDI annual review be noted and EDI priorities for the year ahead agreed.**

ACTION – Reach out to specialist networks to secure greater representation on the board when filling vacancies

2.5 **Membership and Succession Planning Update** *(previously circulated)*

The Chair referred members to the Clerk's report from which the following points were highlighted:

Governors with terms of office due to expire during 2025-26

Three Foundation Governors had terms of office due to expire during the academic year:

- Mick Martin – term ends on 28 February 2026
- Sarah Carroll – term ends on 3 July 2026
- Graeme Slater – term ends on 3 July 2026

Discussion ensued on the balance to be struck between stability on the Board and the potential benefits of bringing in new members, especially to address identified areas of underrepresentation. Reference was also made to governance best practice and Code of Governance expectations for individuals to serve no longer than two terms of office unless exceptional circumstances applied. It was agreed that the governors' intentions would be established to determine whether they wished to be considered for reappointment.

Specific discussion ensued on succession planning challenges around the chairing of Quality and Standards Committee and the need for a managed leadership transition for such a key committee. Mick Martin confirmed that, if required, he would be willing to serve a further term of office whilst supporting the Quality and Standards Committee Vice Chair towards a potential leadership role. Beyond this point, he indicated a willingness to stand down should a new Foundation Governor be identified who better addressed the Board's skills and diversity priorities. Members were in agreement with this approach and recommended Mick Martin for re-appointment as Foundation Governor.

Further consideration would be given to succession planning at the next meeting when the intentions of the remaining governors, alongside a complete term of attendance data, would be known.

Vice Chair of Governors' term of office

The Clerk indicated that the Vice Chair of Governors' term of office had come to an end and the nomination/election process would take place at the next Governing Body meeting in December.

Parent Governor Vacancy

One self-nomination had been received from Paul Forester and a brief overview of Paul's background and experience was provided. All standard documents and declarations had been received and the next step was to arrange an initial meeting

with Paul prior to presenting the appointment to the Governing Body for approval. Discussion ensued on the current Committee structure and membership and, following consideration of Paul's skills and experience, it was agreed to recommend his assignment to the Audit Committee.

Resolved:

- **That the membership and succession planning update be received and noted.**
- **That Mick Martin be recommended for reappointment as Foundation Governor from 1 March 2026 subject to Archdiocese approval.**

**ACTION – (a) FGB agenda item – reappointment of Foundation Governor
(b) FGB agenda item – Vice Chair of Governors election
(c) FGB agenda item – Parent Governor appointment
(d) Search & Governance Committee agenda item (Spring Term) – update on Foundation Governor succession planning**

3. GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Board Member Survey 2025 *(previously circulated)*

The Chair referred members to the report the Clerk had produced containing the anonymised results of the annual board member survey conducted in July 2025. The response rate of 76% demonstrated an improvement in engagement from the previous year (2024, 53%). It was noted that all statements apart from one showed an improved average score from the previous year. Discussion ensued on the free text comments and it was agreed that this feedback would be considered as part of the annual governance self-assessment review process.

Resolved:

- **That the Board Member Survey 2025 report be received and noted.**

3.2 Annual Report on Board Member 1-2-1s with Chair *(previously circulated)*

The Chair of Governors presented this report on the outcome of her 1-2-1 meetings with board members during the summer break. Eleven 1-2-1 meetings had been held, representing an engagement level of 79%. The Chair reflected on how useful she had found these sessions as a means of checking in with individual governors and helping to plan for the year ahead. The key themes arising from these meetings were highlighted in the report and fed into the governance self-assessment process. Discussion ensued on the way in which the Board could add value to the senior leadership team (SLT) and reference was made to the upcoming 'Beyond the Agenda' research and benchmarking project. This project was being run by ImpactEd Group and would collect feedback from both the Board and the SLT. It was hoped that the ensuing report would provide additional insight from an SLT perspective.

Resolved:

- **That the annual report on board member 1-2-1s with the Chair be received and noted.**

3.3 Code of Governance – annual review of compliance *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk presented an updated self-assessment report against the principles of good governance set out within the Charity Governance Code. It was noted that this review had been considered by the Audit Committee as part of its overarching

assurance work. The Clerk explained that the Code worked on an 'apply or explain' basis and detailed evidence and explanations were provided for each of the Code's principles. Where appropriate, suggested areas for development had been incorporated into the draft Governance Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Discussion ensued on the content of the report which all agreed provided a detailed overview of the College's practice. There were certain areas where it was felt that additional evidence was available to support compliance with the principles and it was agreed that the report would be updated as follows:

1.3.1 – additional evidence of the Catholic life of the College

1.5.3 – additional evidence of stakeholder engagement.

Resolved:

- **That the code of governance annual review of compliance be received and noted.**

ACTION – Update self-assessment report at points 1.3.1 and 1.5.3

3.4 Governance SAR and QIP (previously circulated)

The Clerk presented the draft Governance Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for consideration. This document brought together all the quantitative and qualitative evidence from the previous reports and identified the key strengths and areas for development. As a result, four key governance priorities had been identified for 2025-26. The QIP detailed the specific actions and timelines to drive improvement, against which progress could be monitored.

Committee members considered the content of the draft SAR and QIP and confirmed the identified governance priorities and associated action plan. Discussion ensued on the recent themed governor visit to College which had taken place in September and the plans for future visits. In addition, the Principal indicated that progress with determining the vision for academisation would be dependent on the publication of the Archdiocese of Liverpool's academisation strategy, the timeline for which was still unclear.

Resolved:

- **That the Governance SAR and QIP be recommended for approval to the Governing Body.**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

4. COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS

4..1 Review of KPI performance 2024-25 and approval of KPIs 2025-26 (previously circulated)

The Clerk advised governors that the Committee was required to review its own performance annually and presented an analysis of performance against agreed KPIs from the previous academic year. It was noted that all KPIs had been achieved.

Discussion ensued on the draft KPIs for 2025-26. It was agreed that given the strong performance last year, the wording of KPI 1 should be changed from 'improve' to 'sustain'. Further discussion took place on KPI 5 and the reporting of Governing

Body protected characteristics. The Clerk confirmed that Governing Body data on all characteristics was collected but not all data was included in the EDI annual report as, where possible, reporting for governors was aligned with that for staff and students. Following further discussion around the importance of nurturing an open and inclusive culture, it was agreed that data on sexual orientation should be added to the Governing Body EDI annual report.

Resolved:

- **That the Search Committee KPIs for 2025-26 be approved subject to minor amendment of KPI 1.**

ACTION – (a) Amend wording of KPI 1

(b) Add sexual orientation data to Governing Body EDI annual report

4.2 Review of Committee Skills Analysis and Training Plan (previously circulated)

The Clerk presented an anonymised analysis of the 2025 skills audit responses for Search & Governance Committee members. It was noted that the average score for all questions was four. As a result, no significant skills gaps were evident on the Committee.

Members were reminded of the training opportunities available to all members as discussed under item 2.3. Members were invited by the Clerk to flag any additional, bespoke training that might be required to support the work of the Committee. None was identified.

Resolved:

- **That the Search & Governance Committee skills analysis report be received and noted.**

5. OTHER MATTERS

5.1 Governor Training

Members were invited to update the Clerk on any training activities they had completed since the last meeting. No activities were reported.

5.2 Urgent Business

None

5.3 Date of next meeting

The Chair indicated that she was no longer available for the next meeting scheduled for Monday 2 March 2026 at 3pm. It was agreed that an alternative date would be identified.

ACTION – Identify alternative date for Spring Term Committee meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution at the meeting. There being no further business to address, the Chair closed the meeting at 4.05pm.

Signed by the Chair



On this day _____ 23 March 2026 _____