Notre Dame
CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

MINUTES OF MEETING

STRATEGY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 12 MAY 2026 AT 5.00PM

Principles: *Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership*
Virtues: *Trust, Wisdom, Kindness, Justice, Service, Courage, Optimism*

PRESENT John Barnes (Committee Chair, Vice-Chair of Corporation, Chair of Audit)
David Wright (Chair of Finance & Resources)
Father Michael Hall (Chair of Corporation and Chair of Curriculum and Standards)
Justine Barlow (Principal)

IN ATTENDANCE: Rebecca Clacher (Clerk to the Corporation)

Quorum – two governors excluding the Principal

		ACTION
1.00	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**	
1.01	The Committee Chair extended a welcome to the Clerk for their first meeting of Strategy and Governance Committee.	
1.02	Congratulations were extended to the Principal and the College for winning the FE College of the Year Award by Educate North and for attending the Royal Garden Party in recognition of contributions to education.	
2.00	**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**	
2.01	No declarations were declared.	
3.00	**MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**	
3.01	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 January 2026 had been circulated and were approved. Matters arising were dealt with on the agenda for this meeting.	

3.02	A governor asked about the recognition of service for a long-serving governor who had recently stood down. The Clerk would confirm the Diocese had correct details about this.	**Clerk**
3.03	Q. A governor asked about actions still required for International Students and the Home Office. The Principal responded that the College was ready to follow procedure for these students following their examinations, at which point under Home Office rules the College would have completed its duties.	
4.00	**STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE COLLEGE**	
4.01	The Principal gave a verbal update on strategic matters, explaining that the education landscape was changing swiftly. The main points were:	
4.02	• Through the Principal's National Leader for Education role, she had attended the FE Commissioner's meeting in April. There was an increasing focus on governance and strong leadership in education. This was understood within the College, and these topics would also be addressed at the Away Day. It was important for governors to understand the data for all student groups and in relation to local, regional and national benchmarks.	
4.03	• There were increasing challenges with finance, particularly external factors: - The NEU were pushing for an above-inflation pay rise and so there would be national negotiations. - Current global events and the impact on the economy had not yet filtered down to utility bills and equipment. The DFO was closely monitoring this. - Funding models may change which would need consideration for the growth of the College and planning for this. This would be discussed at Finance and Resources Committee.	
4.04	• The Principal had attended a presentation given to Catholic Secondary Heads about curriculum reform for post-16. The Principal felt the College was in a good position to respond to changes. New provision was required from August 2027 but currently there was no specification about this, despite now needing to advertise for these courses.	
4.05	• Managing staff workload and wellbeing in an ever-changing educational landscape and balancing this with an attractive curriculum offer was a key priority for the College.	
4.06	• There had been an appointment of the CEO of St Carlos Acutis MAT, which was one of the two new MATS established by the Diocese to replace the existing 5 Diocesan MATS. The Principal had raised a question for the interview process in relation to academisation of other	

	colleges. The response had been reassuring and the Principal felt that the Diocese had listened to concerns. The aim was for the two new CEOs take up their posts in September.	
4.07	• The Principal had attended a Post-16 diocesan network with five school sixth-forms which had been positive. The Chair had been given some new responsibility over three dioceses, and this could offer further networking opportunities. The Principal hoped to extend Stella Maris to other Catholic Sixth Forms. This would further support relationship-building with school sixth-forms.	
4.08	• The College was making good progress against the Annual Strategic Action Plan. Sir Frank McLaughlin from the ETF had visited the College and was impressed by his visit.	
4.09	• The annual strategic conversation with the DFE was coming up and the Chair of Corporation and Vice-Chair would attend.	
4.10	Q. A governor asked about action points for the local sixth-form support network. A. The Principal responded that this was positive and good practice was being shared for specific subjects (e.g. staff peer reviews). There was also an action plan for sharing trips and visiting speakers and regular updates for curriculum reform. The next meeting would be before the summer break, where the EPQ programme could be discussed.	
4.11	Q. A governor enquired about the College's dialogue with the Combined Authority and how this may be affected after changes from the recent local elections. A. The Principal reported that there had been a meeting at Leeds City College where the CEO of Leeds City Council attended. The colleges were keen to position the importance of post-16 and to ensure it was funded appropriately; noting that Leeds benefits from three major providers that do not duplicate provision. There was an upcoming meeting with Tracey Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire, for the Learning Alliance. Governors agreed it was important to continue to be visible and raise the profile of ND and post-16 provision in the city.	
5.00	**GOVERNOR ATTENDANCE TO DATE**	
5.01	Attendance statistics for governors up to the date of this meeting had been circulated.	
5.02	The Chair of Corporation reported that he had met with governors individually in recent months. As part of these meetings he had raised attendance where there had been recurring absences.	

6.00	**MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**	
6.01	A summary of findings from a recent poll on audit committee membership held by the FE Clerk Network had been circulated to support discussion.	
6.02	It was agreed that a new incoming governor would be asked to join the Audit Committee. This would offer additional strength to Audit Committee.	
6.03	The Principal sitting on Audit Committee was discussed. The Clerk would follow this up with the DFO who had asked the auditor about it.	**Clerk**
7.00	**GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT & SUCCESSION PLANNING**	
7.01	The Chair of Corporation offered a verbal update on current recruitment to governor vacancies. The current list of governors (and vacancies) had been circulated.	
7.02	Application forms had been submitted by two potential Foundation Governors.	
7.03	It was felt that committees were in a good position in terms of Chairs: • Graeme Brown had agreed to become Chair of Curriculum and Standards in September. He would also stand as second Vice-Chair which would be taken to Full Corporation. • David Ellis had agreed to become Chair of Audit Committee. • David Wright had agreed to remain as Chair of Finance and Resources in the interim until a successor was identified.	**Clerk**
7.04	The Clerk gave an update on the election to Parent Governor. Six applications had been received and five had gone forward to election. Candidate statements had been anonymised and sent to parents for voting. The deadline was Friday 15th May.	
7.05	Q. Were there plans for a robust induction for new governors? The Clerk responded that she had been working on induction. This included asking contacts in the Clerk's network about their induction policies and procedures to learn best practice.	
7.06	Two Foundation Governors would come to the end of their term in December. The Committee discussed the next steps for this.	
8.00	**GOVERNOR TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**	
8.01	A report on training carried out by governors during the current academic year had been circulated.	

8.02 8.03 8.04	The Principal raised the thematic trends which would be helpful when considering training. The Principal would provide an executive summary on the themes. A governor recommended this Committee needed to discuss a training plan, including topics, who would deliver each session, and how it would be delivered. The Clerk would create a draft training plan with support from others and bring to this Committee. Q. A governor asked about an Executive Summary sheet to go on documents and reports. The Clerk explained that she was working on this and wanted feedback from colleagues. It included a prompt to highlight any risks involved with the content of a document.	**Principal** **Clerk**
9.00 9.01	**STUDENT GOVERNORS** The Clerk gave a verbal update about the role of student governor. She had met with Helen Collins to discuss ideas, and the new Student Executive had now been appointed. The Clerk would attend an event in June for Governance Professionals and Student Governors to learn best practice from other colleges. The Clerk planned to offer support and guidance to student governors in their role.	
10.00 10.01 10.02	**EXTERNAL REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS** a. A report on progress to date on the external review recommendations had been circulated. It was advised that the next review in 2027 would build from the last review. The report on progress needed to be sufficiently detailed. The Clerk would continue to work on this. b. The Committee noted that the next External Governance Review was due by June 2027. This Committee would outline a brief for external reviewer in the Autumn for the Clerk to send out to potential review organisations.	**Clerk**
11.00 11.01 11.02	**STRATEGY AWAY DAY** The agenda had been circulated for the Strategy Away Day to be held on Thursday 11 June 2026 at Weetwood Hall. The Chair commented that this was a coherent and topical programme and would be a useful day. It was agreed that incoming governors would be invited to the event.	
12.00 12.01	**ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**	

	None raised.	
13.00 13.01	**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING** The suggested date of the next meeting was Wednesday 9 September 2026, 5pm. This would be confirmed on the publication of the annual governance calendar.	

Meeting closed at 5.55pm.