

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Meeting on 23 April 2026 on Microsoft Teams at 4.00pm.

**Present:** Mr I Murphy, Chair (IM), Mr M Higgins (MH), Ms D McIlwaine (DMI), Mr B Patterson (BP)

**In Attendance:** Mr D Blair (DB), Mrs C Brown (CB), Mr M Lennox (ML), Ms C Murdoch (CM), Mr J Ross (JR), Ms S Scannell, Mrs K Wallace, Secretary (KW)

#### **48.1 Apologies**

None.

#### **48.2 Declaration of Interests**

No declarations were made.

#### **48.3 Minutes of Previous Meetings**

The minutes of the Resources Committee meetings held on 22 January 2026 and 26 March 2026 were approved on the proposal of MH and seconded by BP.

#### **48.4 Matters Arising**

The Committee reviewed actions arising from previous meetings:

- A formal letter of recognition had been issued to Kieran Mooney on 31 March 2026, acknowledging his significant contribution. The Committee welcomed confirmation that this action was completed.
- DMI asked that meeting notes include the introduction of an action log with clearer action tracking, named owners and agreed timescales for completion. This approach was endorsed by the Committee.
- Cyber security-related recommendations from the March 2026 meeting would be addressed under the dedicated Cyber Security agenda item.
- The Committee noted that Information Management training had been issued to all staff.

#### **48.5 Chair's Communication/Correspondence**

IM provided a detailed update on recent Departmental engagement attended by Chair and Chairs of committees.

Members were briefed on the FE Reform Programme including four key strategic issues emerging from Departmental discussions:

1. Curriculum review
2. Performance against the Corporate Development Plan (CDP) across the FE sector
3. Financial value for money (VFM)
4. Collaboration across colleges

MH advised that Chairs and Principals had met the Minister followed by a Department briefing. Relevant materials will be shared. A Departmental media release had already been shared with Governors for information.

MH further outlined that task and finish groups made up of curriculum staff would be established over the coming months. CB confirmed that staff attending forthcoming workshops had been selected to ensure broad representation across curriculum areas and levels (L0–L6), with participation alongside NWRC and SWC. Two workshops, each with three colleges represented, were scheduled.

JR joined the meeting at 4.10pm.

Discussion followed regarding Value for Money (VFM) processes, with DMI querying whether existing procurement arrangements remained proportionate. MH acknowledged the challenges but emphasised the benefits of the current process, noting that VFM assessments increasingly consider unit cost comparisons over multi-year periods.

BP added that VFM now encompasses social value, not solely financial efficiency. MH reinforced this point, highlighting recent information on social licence requirements, including apprenticeships, training outputs and capital investment. IM cited the social benefit delivered through activity in Larne as a practical example.

The Committee noted that the Minister had clearly stated that current work does not represent college mergers, and that this message would continue to be reinforced.

#### **48.6 Cyber Security Progress**

DMI referenced actions and questions raised at the March meeting. JR provided a comprehensive update.

JR advised that cyber security training had been strengthened, with a customised training package developed in line with NCSC guidance and tailored specifically for the College. Training is now being rolled out and will be monitored monthly for compliance.

Expressions of interest from Committee members willing to undertake the role of GB cyber liaison member were requested.

JR confirmed:

- That a two-year cyber incident simulation exercises cycle would be appropriate and proportionate. The first simulation is planned for June 2026.
- A review of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) has been completed.
- Work will continue on the compartmentalisation of highly sensitive data once prerequisite controls are embedded.
- Recovery objectives are being developed as part of the managed Security Operations Centre (SOC) service.

He reported that Phase 1 cyber actions focused on phishing protection are complete, with a contract signed with Boxphish and implementation commencing the following week.

Additional updates included:

- A hardware refresh for network access infrastructure has been approved and ordered, with installation expected in July / early August
- A contract has been signed with JISC for a 24/7 Security Operations Centre, with an anticipated implementation period of at least 90 days. This will require significant internal resource commitment but will result in continuous monitoring and response capability

- A business case for immutable backups has been approved; however, implementation is deferred due to capital constraints. The Committee noted that SOC controls will prioritise prevention and detection in the interim

IM raised future requirements for AI-enabled software, potentially including Microsoft Copilot. JR advised that JISC is already in discussions with Microsoft on FE-wide licensing arrangements. The Committee agreed that clear business requirements and a supporting business case would be required prior to adoption.

The Chair thanked JR for the update.

JR left the meeting at 4.30pm.

#### **48.7 Curriculum Development Plan (CDP) Progress Report**

MH noted that the report showed progress to the end of January 2026, which would be updated to end of March 2026. He noted that full delivery targets for business productivity/growth have not been achieved, largely due to staff sickness affecting skills up programmes and was likely to be updated to red.

CB explained the complexity arising from different measurement points (financial year vs academic year) on curriculum targets. She noted improvement on overall enrolment and student numbers. Confidence was expressed that this aim will be achieved by the end of the academic year and reported as green.

A submission relating to skills completion targets is being collated for end-April reporting.

#### **48.8 Net Zero Baseline Report**

ML joined the meeting at 4.35pm and presented the Net Zero baseline and adaptation work.

ML advised that the mitigation report had been submitted, and substantial progress had also been made on the adaptation report, largely led by Kyle Leckey. The next step is to reactivate the internal sustainability group to progress recommendations, embedding sustainability considerations into all relevant areas of College activity, subject to funding availability.

MH thanked ML and Kyle for the significant work undertaken. Members discussed funding constraints and noted that all colleges have submitted bids for additional sustainability funding under the CSR process.

ML highlighted several practical and behavioural measures that can be progressed, including:

- More efficient use of teaching spaces to reduce heating demand
- Improved procurement approaches with sustainability considerations
- Baseline footprint adjustments reflecting the move into newer, more efficient campuses
- Exploration of staff car-sharing initiatives

DMI sought assurance on adaptation measures for climate risks. ML outlined existing work relating to flooding, emergency planning, drainage systems, and resilience measures in new buildings. Pest management risks associated with warmer weather were also discussed.

The Committee noted that many recommendations within the report are already covered by existing inspections, risk assessments and estates strategies, but welcomed the comprehensive approach.

ML left the meeting at 4.49pm.

#### **48.9 Accounts Update**

DB advised that the Report to Those Charged with Governance and audit opinion were expected to be issued in the next week. Work on component accounts continues, with clear improvements evident in systems and processes.

IM noted the longer-term implications of disclaimed accounts and the importance of robust assurance leading into the 2027 and 2028 accounts. DB confirmed that progress was being made and improvements clearly evidenced.

#### **48.10 Financial Update**

SS reported that an extension had been granted for submission of the provisional outturn. An overspend is currently indicated, though figures are still subject to final adjustment, and the Department has been kept fully informed.

SS outlined the complexity of managing two sets of accounts and the impact this has on the outturn position. Close engagement continues with the Department to ensure accuracy and transparency.

MH emphasised the importance of achieving accurate closing balances, particularly for March 2026 and July 2025, to support the exit from disclaimed accounts.

Staffing within the finance team was discussed. SS confirmed interim support from Deloitte, successful recruitment to some vacant posts, use of experienced internal staff for system support, and ongoing efforts to secure agency cover. A full review of the finance function remains planned.

#### **48.11 New Build Update**

MH confirmed that the Ballymena campus has been fully handed over and is now within the one-year defects liability period to February 2027.

Causeway is fully operational, the project board will meet shortly for final sign-off, after which post-project evaluation will be undertaken in line with Gateway review processes. Gateway 5 documentation has been submitted to the Department for peer review.

Student feedback from induction surveys has been very positive. Transport challenges were noted, with many students preference to travel by car. MH advised that work will be progressed with ML to encourage use of public transport.

The Committee again noted the recognition of Kieran Mooney's contribution and welcomed confirmation that he continues to support the College on a part-time basis.

#### **48.12 HR Update**

CM joined the meeting at 5.08pm and presented key points from the HR paper Including:

- Recruitment activity continues to be carefully aligned with budget management and Departmental headcount reporting.
- SMT review remains planned, with recommendations expected later in the year.
- Absence levels were higher than the previous academic year, reflecting a wider sector trend for January–March. Long-term absence has declined.

- A significant programme of policy review is underway in partnership with Trade Unions, including work on support staff policies.

MH updated members on sector-level negotiations relating to pay parity and workload review, noting potential future financial implications.

CB outlined progress within the subgroup set up to look at workload, focusing initially on two significant non-teaching academic roles with the aim of improving consistency across the sector.

**48.13 Any Other Business**


None

**48.14 Date of Next Meeting**

3 June 2026.

The meeting closed at 5.17pm

Mr I Murphy, Chair



Date 03.06.26

Mrs K Wallace, Secretary



## Resources Committee action log

Item No	Page (item)	Action	Raised by	Owner	Timescale	Status
R48/01	2 (4)	Implement revised meeting notes structure, ensuring all actions are recorded with named owners and agreed deadlines for completion.	DMI	KW	Immediate – ongoing	Closed
R48/02	3 (5)	Bring forward nominations from the Resources Committee for a Governing Body Cyber Liaison Member and confirm appointment.	MH	IM	Next Committee/ GB meeting	