

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting on 3 June 2026 on Microsoft Teams at 4.00 pm.

Present: Mr Ian Murphy (Chair), Mr Mel Higgins (Principal), Ms Paula Leitch, Ms Denise McIlwaine, Mr David Nichol, Mr Brendan Patterson

In Attendance: Mrs Sinead Scannell; Mrs Ruth Toms (Acting Secretary)

Partial Attendance: Mr John Ross 49.6; Mr Craig Fairless 49.7 and 49.8; Mrs Claire Murdoch, 49.9; and Mr David Blair, 49.10 and 49.11.

49.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all members, with a particular welcome extended to Paula and David on their first meeting of Committee.

49.2 Declaration of Interests

No declarations were made.

49.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

BP proposed and MH seconded approval of the minutes of the meetings held on 23 April 2026.

49.4 Matters Arising

- Members noted that a revised meeting notes structure has been implemented and is complete.
- Nominations are being sought for a Governing Body Cyber Liaison Member.

49.5 Chair's Communication/Correspondence

Committee Standing Orders were presented for annual review. All members noted content.

MH noted some outdated terminology requiring updates.

Action: KW to update outdated terminology prior to presenting to the GB meeting.

49.6 Cyber Security Progress

J Ross was welcomed to the meeting to provide updates on the work in progress in respect of Cyber Security. He advised that preparation continues with the necessary

configuration work to enable the Managed Security Operations Centre (SOC) service to go live in July 2026, strengthening the organisation's cyber resilience through continuous 24/7 monitoring, threat detection, and incident response. In parallel, work is ongoing with preparation for Cyber Essentials Plus reaccreditation in the coming months, together with the refresh of 400 PCs in Newtownabbey Campus, necessary to permit the move to Windows 11 Operating system. He further advised of planned test exercises in respect of business continuity in the event of a cyber-attack and a test of processes.

IM requested nominees as a Governor representative for Cyber matters.

DN expressed interest and PL indicated that she may be interested.

It was agreed to share the presentation given at a recent Resources Meeting with the new members.

Action: KW to share Cyber Presentation with new Resources Committee Members.

JR was thanked for his attendance and input and left the meeting.

49.7 College Development Plan (CDP)

C Fairless was welcomed to the meeting and provided detail of the DfE commissioning of the 2026/27 CDP, noting the draft submission is now due to DfE on 18 June 2026.

The draft document was shared with the members in advance.

CF noted the draft nature of the figures, advising that there could be changes, depending on any confirmation of budget allocation.

MH noted the plan is steady state, highlighting that we have 15k enrolments in 2025/26, which is a growth position. We are working on all things being the same as last year; adding that the approach for 2026/27 is for steady state. He noted that the current planning position in the context of the potential budget situation is counter-productive to the Minister's desire to see growth.

IM noted the improved position the College is in and the positive impact of the New Builds, he would like to see continued growth.

CF was thanked for his presentation of the CDP.

49.8 Business Engagement Annual Update

The Annual Business Engagement Update presentation was shared in advance with members. CF provided a high-level overview of the key points within, including a snapshot of the growth over the past 7 years. He noted that the strategy will be developed in line with the 2026/29 Strategic Plan. He noted that income streams for 26/27 have not been confirmed. CF noted the position in respect of various streams, including Skills Focus,

InnovateUs, Assured Skills Academies, Schools Partnerships, Skill Up and Step Up. He advised that once allocations are confirmed, there are areas where we will be able to increase provision.

IM thanked CF for his paper and suggested that, given the significance of Multiply, Skill Up and Step Up, there should be a breakdown of those figures next time.

MH asked about alternative sources of income if nothing is forthcoming e.g. Shared Island, Peace Fund, etc; he also asked that if we reduce provision, due to a delay in confirmation of funding, is there an impact on staffing resources.

CF noted there is a sector collaboration group and shared bids have been submitted; he added that there are also bids through council LEPs. Regarding staffing, he noted the temporary nature of relevant staff contracts.

CF was thanked for his input and attendance and left the meeting.

49.9 HR Update

CM was welcomed to the meeting to present her report, previously shared with members.

CM highlighted the key areas within the report including Recruitment, which was noted as significantly slower within the reporting period; she noted that staff absence has been decreasing and cases are being managed in line with procedures; she noted ongoing employee relations matters, providing an update on some of the figures within the report.

MH advised of discussion at the CEF meeting on 1 June 2026 and provided an update in respect of Holiday Pay.

DM sought clarification on the HE Advance programme; CM provided further detail on duration and selection for the programme.

DM enquired about completion of performance reviews; CM provided an update on the position, noting impacting factors.

PL sought clarification on a matter in respect of staff sickness absence and CM provided further breakdown.

IM sought clarification on the lower rate of completion of performance reviews within Finance.

SS provided an update on completion and noted the mitigating factors impacting on completion by the due date.

CM was thanked for her report and attendance and left the meeting.

49.10 Accounts Update

DB welcomed to the meeting to present the Accounts Update papers and outlined the key 4 points: the July 2024 College Statutory accounts received a disclaimed opinion and the draft audit report issued from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) on 11 May 2026. Expected completion will be revised from end of March 2026 to June 2026; the July 2025 College Statutory accounts remain at approximately 80% complete; the DfE Component Accounts Pack (31 March 2026), subject to Accounting Officer final review, was submitted on 22 May 2026, a 3-week delay on the sector deadline of 30 April; and the draft March 2026 College Accounts to be prepared to align to sector.

DN sought clarification on the outstanding issues; DB advised that this relates to Deferred Capital Grants (DCG) and Additions in Property Plant and Equipment (PPE).

SS clarified that the component pack was submitted on 22 May 2026; she noted the internal queries on which she is seeking assurance prior to submitting to DfE, she needs a high level of assurance to satisfy her and allow her to stand over the figures. She noted that the College is under pressure to finalise the submission, adding that DfE are currently content with the balanced primary statements. She noted the steps to be taken to finalise with DfE. SS noted the complexity of the position in that we have been working on 4 sets of accounts at the one time; she noted the issue with Opening Balances and the Quality Assurance process; she explained the process of the accounts which are progressing in parallel. SS advised that closing out 2024/25 accounts by the end of June will be challenging; work plans are being reviewed to ensure that we can deliver as NIAO will potentially be scheduling their Audit to commence in early July.

IM expressed thanks to SS for the work she has undertaken to improve the position, he noted appreciation for SS and the Finance Team's efforts to provide reassurance to DfE.

49.11 Financial Update

DB spoke to the Finance paper previously shared, noting the 2 key points: the provisional outturn Resource overspend of £338k against final approved 2025-26 budget allocation of £34,052k; and the provisional outturn Capital overspend of £86k, against the approved budget of £7,254k.

IM sought clarification on the tolerances imposed by DfE regarding overspend. DB advised that the preference is no overspend, but there is slight tolerance. We keep in touch with DfE Finance to advise in advance of the position.

MH referred to the learning process regarding the overspend and we will build that into our improvement plan going forward; he referred to the final outturn and asked what the likelihood of the figures at that stage still showing overspend.

DB advised that the main differences will be down to OB adjustments, adjustments in-year, as opposed to prior period adjustment; he noted that we are currently balanced but there are still some items still to be clarified.

DM referred to the reference to Optimum Bias in respect of Ballymoney Campus and sought clarification.

DB noted that we will bid for the money against the capital receipt for Ballymoney but this is dependent upon when the purchase is completed.

DM sought and received clarification on the change to DfE reporting requirements in respect of intercompany balances.

DB was thanked for his attendance and input and left the meeting.

49.12 Any Other Business

None.

49.13 Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting to be confirmed.

IM noted this is his last Resources Committee Meeting and expressed thanks to all members. He conveyed special thanks to SS for her very hard work since her appointment in January, he noted the positive impact she has made and the improvements to the position within Finance, he also noted the appreciation of the Committee.

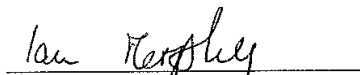
MH echoed the points made by IM in respect of SS, noting the level of scrutiny and assurance being applied and the strong quality assurance being undertaken, providing reassurance to the members.

MH expressed thanks to IM for his insight, challenge and stewardship over the years he has been with the Governing Body and also the Project Board. He noted appreciation for the level of scrutiny and support provided at all times.

DN expressed appreciation to IM, noting his disappointment that he would not get the opportunity to work along with him.

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm.

Mr I Murphy, Chair



Date 16.09.26

Mrs R Toms, Acting Secretary:

