

## **NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

### **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 27 January 2025 on Microsoft Teams commencing at 4.00pm.

Present: Mr I Murphy (Chair), Mr M Higgins, Mrs C McGovern, Mrs D McIlwaine, Mr R McKernan, Ms J Taggart

In Attendance: Mr D Blair, Mrs C Brown, Mr S Lavery, Mrs C Murdoch (42.7), Mr J Ross (42.11)

Secretary: Mrs K Wallace

**42.1 Apologies** None.

**42.2 Declaration of Interests** None.

#### **42.3 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The draft minutes of the meeting on 14 October 2024 were considered.

CMG requested and received an update on the AEL lease and the additional interested party referred to in the minutes.

The minutes were approved.

Proposed: Mr McKernan

Seconded: Mrs McGovern

#### **42.4 Matters Arising**

The Invest NI regional plan had been circulated and considered as part of the Strategy Day event. The accounting pack had also been shared.

#### **42.5 Chair's Communications / Correspondence**

Members noted the RSM Student Enrolments and Admissions report, and the Budget Allocation letter which would be discussed later in the meeting.

Attention was drawn to the Public Sector Transformation Paper, provided for background information. MH reported that transformation had been a focus of a DfE event on 20 January and anticipated this becoming more topical in the next financial year.

#### **42.6 CDP Progress Report**

MH took members through the CDP November 2024 quarterly report to DfE, which had been approved in January 2025. He outlined 2 targets unlikely to be achieved and all other measures on target for achievement.

Members noted the update and new report format.

CM joined the meeting at 4.17pm.

#### **42.7 HR Update**

CM presented her paper and highlighted key issues including mandatory training, performance management and learning and development.

CM answered queries from RMK on a marginal increase in College turnover and mandatory training. She also advised that the subject of recruitment was on the collaboration work plan for the sector HR Working Group and outlined some topics being explored.

IM welcomed improved training numbers. In response to his question on risk presented by untrained individuals, CM advised current communications procedures being carried out which would enhance the employer's reasonable steps defence. Members noted that this message would be reinforced as part of the appraisal process.

IM queried whether the option to work from home could be withdrawn for individuals who had not completed required training. CM was unsure whether it would impact the 18% of staff involved.

**An analysis of work patterns for staff still to complete training would be brought to the next meeting.**

CMG referred to the recent Employee Relations training, which she found very beneficial, and asked for an update on the number of staff trained. She stressed the importance of regular updates and/or training being provided as part of the induction process.

**CM would bring an update on number of staff receiving ER training, to the next meeting.**

In response to CMG's queries on adequacy of current frequency for performance appraisals, CM highlighted the sectoral contractual and policy conditions and the role of one-to-one meetings by HODs in the intervening year.

In relation to employee wellbeing, DMI queried if this was a standard operating practice and how it was communicated to staff. CM explained the sector procedure on management of sickness, which formed part of the induction process for HR staff and included the Health & Wellbeing Manager where appropriate. She also noted that sectoral policies were currently being looked at but no completion date had been set.

DMI queried the reason for difference in staff numbers referred to in the earlier RSM report and in the College report. DB explained that one report referred to 'full time equivalents' (FTEs) and the other was headcount.

SL thanked CM and team for the reporting process put in place to improve mandatory training, and noted that discretionary ½ day leave for staff at Christmas and Easter was awarded dependent on completion.

In relation to a question from JT, CM clarified difficulty in attraction and recruitment of lecturing staff had minimal impact on curriculum delivery in the current academic year, with Electrical Installation delivery being picked up by a new lecturer part way through the year.

CB noted the limitations for curriculum and growth imposed by ongoing recruitment challenges in key areas.

JT queried any insights into a solution and noted CM's response on a number of issues being looked at by the working group.

MH thanked CM for the update and the progress made in increasing training and performance review figures. He noted progress on the reconstitution of the CEF which, when completed, would enable negotiations to commence with TUs on T&Cs and policy reviews. It was hoped that most of these could be in place before the start of the next academic year.

CM left the meeting at 4.48pm.

#### **42.8 Draft Annual Accounts**

DB reported that the draft 2023/24 Accounts had now been submitted to NIAO who are currently content with the hot review, with Kathy Doey and the audit team scheduled to be onsite in Farm Lodge from 4 February. He outlined communication with NIAO and with the Department, and daily engagement with MH and SL. Approval for the accounts would be sought from GB on 26 March.

SL thanked DB and the finance team for their work to achieve this position, which would now allow attention to focus on the College's July accounts. He clarified the deficit situation noting that the College had the fourth lowest position across the sector.

CMG thanked DB and the team for the effort put into getting the accounts completed.

SL responded to a number of questions from CMB on the accounts including the cash balance situation, Causeway campus NBV figure, lessons learned from a critical review by NIAO, and the College's current position for the March and July accounts.

DB outlined difficulties being faced by the sector on meeting the NIAO deadlines, and the importance of quickly and efficiently closing out the upcoming audit.

SL noted that the March 2025 accounts process would be cleaner, especially with a full staff complement supplemented by additional support.

CMG noted that the internal audit of financial control was scheduled for March 2025.

The Chair thanked DB and the finance team for their work.

MH advised members on the context for the convening of a Financial Accounts Improvement Committee (FAIC), comprising the GB Chair, the Chair of Resources, the Chair of Audit & Risk, the Principal and the COO. He detailed the purpose and plans for the FAIC, which would be reviewed by the Department who would decide any other actions/steps which need to be taken. Members noted that updates would be shared with Resources and A&R Committees over the next few months.

The Chair stressed the importance of this work in reassuring the Department that issues were being dealt with in an efficient and effective manner, and to ensure that all NIAO requirements are met and all necessary resources are in place to meet the new year-end.

#### **42.9 Finance Update**

DB took members through the reports provided and reported that the Department year-end component audit was now complete on the College side.

MH advised a positive financial position to the end of March but outlined anticipated pressure from a reduction in budget from 1 April. He advised the likelihood of approval being sought from Committee to put forward funding bids going forward.

SL outlined difficulties in the current, uncertain budget situation and asked for Committee's endorsement to flag up risk around AI and ESG, with no extra funding being provided for net zero activities.

**Recommended that AI and ESG be added to the risk register for discussion at the next A&R meeting.**

#### **42.10 New Build Update**

SL noted the success of the Causeway Campus build. With Ballymena on target for completion January/February 2026, he reported on a bid to the Department to cover extra building costs. Committee noted that this would not cover new PCs.

JR joined the meeting at 5.28pm.

#### **42.11 IT Update**

JR gave a summary of the paper provided and highlighted issues for IT, including the possible impact on cyber essentials accreditation, arising from the rollout of the Windows 11 operating system. Members noted the current position and the 3 options available to the College.

SL advised that a business case would be done to take forward the best option for the College and noted that this was a sector wide issue.

MH outlined major risk for IT in relation to importance of ensuring system security. MH advised that cost could not be met within current resources and asked for Committee's endorsement to seek key priority funding.

JR referred to the volume of attacks on security and the importance of understanding what was needed to ensure cyber security.

SL noted that this risk had been raised at NIFON and would be included on the College risk register.

**Committee recommended that this risk be added to the risk register.**


The Chair emphasised that details of all IT resources needed by the College should be drawn up, in the event that funding became readily available.

JR was thanked for his report.

**42.12 Any Other Business** none.

**42.13 Date of Next Meeting** 7 April 2025

The meeting ended at 5.44pm.

Mr I Murphy 

Date 07.04.25

(Chair)

Mrs K Wallace 

(Secretary)

### Action Log

Item No		Person Responsible	Date Due	Actioned
42.7	Analysis of work patterns for staff still to complete training.	CM	07.04.25	
	update on number of staff receiving ER training,	CM	07.04.25	
42.9	AI and ESG be added to the risk register	DB	05.03.25	

42.11	IT cyber security be added to the risk register	DB	05.03.25	
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