

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE
RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 23 June 2021 on Microsoft Teams, commencing at 5.04pm.

Present: Ms Y Mallon, Mrs G McConnell, Mr I Murphy (Chair), Prof T Scott

In Attendance: Mrs C Brown, Dr H Dixon, Mr M Higgins, Mr S Laverty, Mr B McGahan, Mr J Ross, Ms J Small

Mrs K Wallace (Secretary)

26.1 Apologies

Mr Graeme Wilkinson.

26.2 Declaration of Interests

None.

26.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the unreserved meeting held on 14 April 2021 were approved.

Proposed: Mrs McConnell

Seconded: Ms Mallon

26.8(i) Budget Update

The Chair welcomed Mr Ross who had been invited to the meeting to talk Committee through the business proposal for a patching solution.

Mr Ross affirmed the College's commitment to risk mitigation and to Cyber Essentials & Essentials Plus accreditation, before providing a summary evaluation of risk mitigation tools which had been trialed by the IT Department, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) detection tools. Members heard that multi-factor authentication (MFA) had now been implemented for College staff and would be introduced for students from September onwards. Alongside this, Mr Ross was confident that utilisation of a development team to carry out patching was the only way to mitigate for security risks posed to College IT systems.

Mr Ross outlined headcount requirements for the proposed development team, the Grade 6 lead of which would be sourced internally.

Committee stressed the importance and significance of protecting the integrity of the Colleges systems and safeguarding the College data in light of recent attacks within the education sector.

ACTION: Committee approved the Business Case for Patching Solution.

The Chair thanked Mr Ross for his presentation.

5.19pm Mr Ross left the meeting.

26.6 Shared Services Update

Dr Dixon spoke to the Shared Services Update Report to 10 June 2021 and highlighted recent trials of the Engage app, which it was hoped to utilise from the start of the new academic year. She restated the expectation that the LMS project timeline would be extended, until the end of December 2021, with additional support to be provided by colleges.

Committee considered and discussed the impact to the College of diverting extensive resources to cover unanticipated reassignments not originally costed into the STS project, notwithstanding that a bid would be submitted to the Department to cover members of staff wholly involved in the work.

Committee noted that the Project Board risk register had been updated to reflect discussions at the risk workshop in April, with work ongoing to ensure the recording of all updates arising from a backlog of documentation.

Members welcomed the upcoming opportunity to receive a presentation from Mr Jim Woods, STS Project Director at the Governing Body meeting on 30 June and thanked Dr Dixon for her work on this topic.

5.40pm Dr Dixon left the meeting.

26.4 Matters Arising

An update on business engagement would be included in the Principal's report to the Governing Body on 30 June.

26.5 Chair's Communications / Correspondence

The Chair referred to this being the Principal's last meeting of Resources Committee, pending her upcoming move to Ulster University Pro Vice-Chancellor. He thanked Prof Scott for her diligence and work for the College and for her support to the Committee and looked forward to wishing her well at the Governing Body meeting on 30 June.

Members noted information on an additional £9m Covid-19 budget provision for the FE sector to ensure safe learning for students. Mr Higgins outlined the process for allocation and submission of bids, the first of which to be with the Department by 25 June 2021.

26.7 HR Update

Committee noted the contents of the HR report to 31 May 2021. Mr Higgins highlighted a number of key topics including review of structures underway; measures to address low uptake of mandatory training, which had been notified to Trade Unions; and levels of staff sickness.

A significant improvement in performance management statistics was noted by members, with the work of Mrs Brown and individual team members acknowledged. The Principal referred to progress made as a result of Mr Higgins' oversight of the HR function during the current year, confirming that plans were underway to take forward a post for Head of People and Talent/Culture.

Committee considered and debated details of a number of proposed new permanent posts and queried the position on temporary/fixed term posts.

ACTIONS:

- Approval was given for the new permanent posts to be advertised.

- Advice to be taken on the position for the proposed baselining of a fixed term post before being referred back to Resources Committee.
- A process to be developed to ensure the review of temporary contracts on a regular basis.

26.8 Budget Update

Committee reviewed the budget update to 31 March 2021, management accounts to 30 April 2021 and initial budget position for 2021/22, and noted the following:

- revised initial budget allocation of £26,192k for 2021/22;
- additional capital bids of £1m placed for 2021/22;
- Covid-19 bids placed for 2021/22;
- bids placed for 10-year Capital Investment Strategy;
- Grahams had been awarded the property maintenance contract.

In answer to members' queries Mr Higgins confirmed the financial position, procurement and timeframes on the Coleraine and Ballymena new builds, with a meeting of the Project Board to be held on 30 June 2021.

26.9 Any Other Business

None.

26.10 Date of Next Meeting

To be agreed at the Governing Body meeting on 30 June 2021.

The meeting concluded at 6.53pm.

Mr I Murphy



(Chair)

Date 13 October 2021

Mrs K Wallace



(Secretary)