Libraries NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of the Board Planning Meeting held on
Thursday 12 September 2019 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library

PRESENT
Professor Bernard Cullen Chairperson
Mr Neil Bodger
Alderman Thomas Burns
Councillor Garath Keating
Mrs Deirdre Kenny
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Alderman Stephen Martin
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE
Mr John Peto
Mr Harry Reid
Dr Margaret Ward
Councillor Billy Webb

IN ATTENDANCE
Mr Jim O’Hagan Chief Executive
Ms Helen Osborn Director of Library Services
Mr Desi Miskelly Director of Business Support
Ms Adrienne Adair Assistant Director
Ms Mandy Bryson Assistant Director
Ms Trisha Ward Assistant Director
Mr Ken Smyth Boardroom Apprentice
Ms Moira Doherty Department for Communities
Mr Paul Gamble Department for Communities
Ms Diane McGlynn Minutes

The Chairperson welcomed Board Members and staff to the meeting, particularly Mrs W Osborne OBE as this was her first Board Meeting and Mr K Smyth as this was his first meeting since he officially became Libraries NI’s Boardroom Apprentice. He extended the welcome to Department for Communities representatives, Ms M Doherty, Deputy Secretary for Engaged Communities Group and Mr P Gamble, Libraries and Museums Branch.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 Apologies were received from Ms K Hill, Director of Active Communities Division, Department for Communities and Councillor S McIlveen.
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Chairperson reminded Members and Officers of the need to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest associated with any item on the agenda either now or at the relevant stage during the meeting. No interests were declared. Councillor G Keating declared an interest in respect of the matter referred to at 7.3 later in the meeting.

3. APPOINTMENT OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES

3.1 The Chairperson requested nominations for the new Board Members to be appointed to Committees.

3.2 On a proposal by Mrs D Kenny, seconded by Alderman S Martin, Mrs W Osborne OBE was appointed to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

3.3 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Councillor C Mallaghan, Mr N Bodger was appointed to the Business Support Committee.

3.4 On a proposal by Dr M Ward, seconded by Councillor G Keating, Mr J Peto was appointed to the Services Committee.

4. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

4.1 The Chairperson recapped on the purpose of the meeting which was to allow the Board an opportunity to discuss a number of strategic issues and authorise Officers to undertake further development work on these issues for presentation to the Board at a future date, namely:

- strategic context and a perspective from the Department for Communities
- development of the Corporate Plan 2020 - 24
- development of the Business Plan 2020/21
- long term sustainability approaches to a review of services
- the outworking of the Organisation Structures Review.

4.2 The Chairperson reflected on the vision of Libraries NI and the capacity that libraries have to reach and contribute positively to communities. He acknowledged the declining trend in budget allocations and the current political uncertainty.

5. A DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES PERSPECTIVE

5.1 Ms M Doherty, Deputy Secretary for Engaged Communities Group, Department for Communities, addressed the Board meeting. She has been in
post for seven months and she outlined her experience to date including her personal experience as a library user. Ms M Doherty described the strategic context for the Department for Communities including the draft Programme for Government and the Outcomes Delivery Plan, recognising the impact of the political uncertainty.

5.2 Ms M Doherty described the current funding allocation arrangement and confirmed that at present no further budget reduction measures are imminent. She acknowledged the detrimental impact that any further reduction would have on service delivery for Libraries NI and recognised that significant efficiencies had already been made.

5.3 The Deputy Secretary commended the management, Board and staff of Libraries NI in creating a passionate and credible organisation. She confirmed that the Department recognises the strengths unique to Libraries NI to deliver on a number of Programme for Government outcomes.

5.4 Mr P Gamble, Libraries and Museums Branch, reiterated the above and confirmed his support in raising the profile of libraries, particularly in relation to how libraries contribute to the work of other Departments.

5.5 The Chairperson thanked Ms M Doherty and Mr P Gamble for their contribution and acknowledged that it was encouraging that the Department shared the views of Libraries NI in terms of its potential to deliver on government priorities and to make a real difference to the lives of individuals and communities.

6. AN OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2020 - 24

6.1 The Chief Executive delivered a presentation giving an overview of the corporate planning process. He stated that the forward planning period would remain at four years and defined the purpose, vision and mission of the Corporate Plan. Mr J O'Hagan explained the content and aim of the main sections of the Plan and how the Corporate Plan translates into the business planning process.

6.2 He drew attention the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) approach which Libraries NI is working towards and which aligns with the approach taken in the draft Programme for Government and community planning. Mr J O'Hagan presented the draft Libraries NI outcomes and the strategic goals associated with each outcome.

6.3 The Chairperson facilitated a discussion and thanked the Chief Executive for a very comprehensive presentation. Feedback received during the discussion included:

- The Chairperson suggested amending the vision statement to ‘enhancing lives’ rather than ‘changing lives’
Ms W Osborne suggested wording for the first outcome needed to be revised to re-state it more resolutely as an outcome.

6.4 The Chief Executive welcomed further feedback from Members and asked them to submit any further comments or suggestions via e-mail following the meeting. It was agreed that the Senior Management Team would consider the points made by Members and update and refine the Corporate Plan before presenting a draft to the Board at a future meeting. It was agreed the Corporate Plan should form the basis for now developing the 2020/21 Annual Business Plan.

7. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF SERVICES

7.1 The Director of Business Support delivered a presentation outlining the financial implications to be considered in forward planning. He set the scene summarising how funding is allocated within Libraries NI and drew attention to the budget decline year on year over the past five years albeit with a small in-year increase in 2019/20. Mr D Miskelly weighed up the short-term savings options against the long-term impact on service delivery and participation and highlighted the limited scope to make further efficiencies without impacting frontline services. He emphasised the need to consider more significant and longer term measures to manage sustainability in the future.

7.2 The Director of Library Services then delivered a presentation outlining the priorities for consideration in reviewing services. She reminded Members of previous reviews carried out since the inception of Libraries NI which were primarily service-driven in order to apply a consistent approach throughout the service. Ms H Osborn described two possible contexts for service reviews, one as on-going good management practice to ensure efficient and effective service delivery, the second as a response to further significant budget reductions. She then outlined the potential areas for consideration.

7.3 Councillor G Keating declared an interest in respect of the Irish and Local Studies Library as Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Council owns the building in which the service is housed.

7.4 Board Members thanked Mr D Miskelly and Ms H Osborn for their presentations and a full discussion of issues and the proposed approaches ensued.

8. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES REVIEW

8.1 The following Libraries NI staff left the meeting for this item; Ms A Adair, Ms B Bryson, Ms T Ward and Ms D McGlynn.

8.2 The Chief Executive gave a confidential presentation on the Review of Organisational Structures. In the course of this he referred to the forthcoming
retirement of an Assistant Director and set out a number of cost neutral options relating to the Library Services Directorate Management Structure.

8.3 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Board approved the recruitment of a replacement Assistant Director, should this be the preferred option once the Chief Executive has had the opportunity to consider the matter in more detail.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. There was no other business

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next meeting will be held on Thursday 17 October 2019 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library.

11. MEMBERS’ ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

11.1 The meeting ended at 3:00 pm.

11.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

- Councillor Garath Keating left at 12:50 pm
- Alderman Stephen Martin left at 1:20 pm
- Councillor Donal Lyons arrived at 1:53 pm
- Councillor Billy Webb left at 2:35 pm

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 17/10/2019