LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held by remote video link (Zoom)
on Thursday 2 July 2020 at 10.30 am

PRESENT
Professor Bernard Cullen Chairperson
Councillor Donal Lyons Vice-Chairperson

Mr Neil Bodger
Alderman Thomas Burns
Councillor Alistair Cathcart
Councillor Glenn Finlay
Councillor Julie Gilmour
Councillor Cheryl Johnston
Mrs Deirdre Kenny
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Ms Wendy Osborne OBE
Mr John Peto
Mr Harry Reid
Dr Margaret Ward
Councillor Billy Webb
Miss Linda Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE
Mr Jim O’Hagan Chief Executive
Ms Helen Osborn Director of Library Services
Mr Desi Miskelly Director of Business Support
Ms Trisha Ward Head of Service
Mrs Margaret Bell Deputy Head of Service
Mr Ken Smyth Boardroom Apprentice

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Councillor Garath Keating
Ms Adrienne Adair

No observer from the Department was present at the Board Meeting.
2. MEMBERS’ DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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.

3. CHAIRPERSON’S BUSINESS

3.1 The Chairperson welcomed Mrs T Ward, Head of Service and Mrs M Bell, Deputy Head of Service to the meeting.

3.2 Members were reminded of basic video etiquette as follows noting that a copy is available on the Extranet:

- if possible, mute microphones when not speaking to reduce background noise
- raise hand to draw attention or request speaking privileges
- if leaving meeting inform Chair/Minute Taker.

3.3 The Chairperson reported that the Appraisal process for 2019/20 would shortly commence and any Member who wished to meet with him to discuss the process should contact him directly or contact the Chief Executive’s Office. He reminded Members that Gifts and Hospitality Registers for Quarter 4 2019/20 and Declaration of Interests 2020/21 had been e-mailed to Members and asked that they be completed and returned as soon as possible.

3.4 The Chairperson noted that this would be the last Board Meeting for Mr K Smyth, the Boardroom Apprentice, and on behalf of Members thanked Mr Smyth for his contribution to the Board over the past year and wished him every success for the future. Mr Smyth thanked the Chairperson and Members adding that he had found the learning experience very enjoyable. The Chairperson reported that the process to appoint a new Boardroom Apprentice for 2020/21 had already commenced.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

4.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the paper which had been circulated, drawing attention in particular to the undernoted items:

- Department for Communities (DfC), Partnership Meeting, 17 June 2020
- Launch of Summer Reading Challenge by DfC Minister Carál Ní Chuilín, 24 June 2020
- Bertram Books’ going into administration
- DfC Guidance on Culture and Heritage Destinations and Venues
Submission to the DCMS Select Committee Enquiry into the Future of Public Service Broadcasting

4.2 The Chief Executive informed Members that he had received correspondence from DfC in relation to a survey ‘Culture on Public Sector Boards in Northern Ireland’ being conducted by the University of Ulster on behalf of The Executive Office. He agreed to forward the correspondence to Members and encouraged as many as possible to participate.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 4 JUNE 2020

LNI 02.07.20

5.1 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Councillor C Johnston, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 4 June 2020 were approved.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 4 JUNE 2020

LNI 03.07.20

6.1 There was no Matters Arising from the meeting of the Board held on 4 June 2020.

6.2 There were two outstanding matters carried forward from the meeting of the Board held on 23 April 2020 and both were on the Agenda for discussion.

7. OPERATION RECONNECT – UPDATE ON IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) AND RECOVERY PLANS

LNI 04.07.20

7.1 The Chairperson introduced this report and drew attention to the confidential and sensitive information which it contained.

7.2 The Chief Executive referred to previous briefings provided to Members and in particular the briefing provided at the meeting of the Board held on 4 June 2020 at which Members had received information on ‘Operation ReConnect’ a three phased approach to re-opening branch libraries and reconnecting library services. Members were reminded that the re-opening of libraries to the public is subject to the approval by the Northern Ireland Executive and amendment of The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. The Northern Ireland Executive has now announced that libraries can begin re-opening from mid-July and this latest report provides a further update including information and timelines for taking forward the first stage of Operation ReConnect.

7.3 The Chief Executive then drew attention to Section 3: Key Activities, Actions and Timelines which identifies a series of activities and actions which would support implementation of the plan and which fall under three areas, i.e. preparations and planning, services and physical re-opening of branch
libraries. Members noted that it is anticipated that libraries will have reduced opening hours until September.

7.4 Members were reminded that as an employer Libraries NI has a legal and statutory duty to assess risk and, as far as is reasonably possible, take appropriate actions to ensure the health and safety of staff. Updated risk assessments were being completed for all libraries and administration offices as part of the preparations to return to the workplace. All staff would receive an induction on return to work, including dissemination of the staff protocols, access to the risk assessments and operational guidelines and PPE would be made available where appropriate. Throughout the process of preparing to re-open libraries and deliver services communication has been on-going with customers, staff, trades unions, Board Members and the Department for Communities.

7.5 The Chief Executive explained that the re-opening of branch libraries to the public represents an important milestone for Libraries NI in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while libraries will reopen the service offering will remain restricted and this is simply the first stage of Operation ReConnect. Once branch libraries have re-opened consideration would need to be given to a range of issues including:

- feasibility of providing services that require/encourage customers to remain in the library for significant periods of time e.g. study space, newspapers, extended access to computers, heritage services
- services for which there are charges including printing and photocopying
- feasibility of delivery of services from mobile libraries
- programming
- reinstatement of room-hire.

7.6 Members discussed at length the implications for the re-opening of libraries and asked a number of questions, sought clarifications and heard in detail about the work that is taking place to re-open libraries safely and in line with government guidelines.

7.7 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Councillor C Johnston the Board noted the actions and activities, including timelines, outlined in the report and endorsed the proposed approach to this stage of Operation ReConnect as part of the Libraries NI COVID-19 recovery plan.

8. REVISED ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21 LNI 05.07.20

8.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the revised draft Annual Business Plan 2020/21 noting that it had been amended to reflect the level of focus on responding to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic recovery during 2020/21.
8.2 He explained that the main changes related to the ‘Services’ aspects of the plan (outcomes 1 and 2) where the number of annual targets and objectives have been significantly reduced and rewritten. A smaller number have also been removed from outcome 3 and the KPIs have been updated and are more generic in nature.

8.3 It was noted that no specific guidance has been received from DfC on addressing COVID-19 in the context of annual business plans, however the approach taken in revising the Libraries NI Annual Business Plan 2020/21 has been discussed with Departmental officials.

8.4 On a proposal by Ms W Osborne, seconded by Councillor B Webb the Board approved and adopted the revised draft Annual Business Plan 2020/21.

9. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2019/20 LNI 06.07.20

9.1 The Chief Executive presented the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 noting that the document reflected Libraries NI’s achievements and activities throughout the past year.

9.2 He reported that the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 would be submitted to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for audit on 10 July 2020 and confirmed that they had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 17 June 2020.

9.3 Members noted that it was anticipated that the audit of the annual accounts would be completed over the summer and prior to certification by the Northern Ireland Audit Office the final audited Annual Report and Accounts would be brought to the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to be held on 14 October 2020 and then to the Board for approval on 15 October 2020.

9.4 On a proposal by Mrs D Kenny, seconded by Miss L Wilson the Board approved the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 for submission to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for audit.

9.5 Members thanked all staff involved in the preparation of the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20.

10. MANAGEMENT REPORT LNI 07.07.20

10.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support briefed the Board on the Management Report.

Key Performance Indicators 2019/20: End of Year Report LNI 07.07.20 (i)

10.2 Members noted the end of year report for the Key Performance Indicators 2019/20.
Members noted that the Libraries NI Business Plan 2019/20 had included some 70 separate targets. The end of year report shows that 88.6% of the targets in the Business Plan were achieved in full, with a further 5.7% partially achieved and 5.7% not achieved.

The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to May 2020. He reported that in relation to Capital projects, with the exception of the e3 infrastructure upgrading, activity on capital projects had largely been suspended due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result there had been very little spend up to the end of May. He added that the majority of projects had now recommenced in mid-June and advised that spend profiles for the remainder of the financial year had been agreed with DfC.

The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Recurrent report which had been developed from the initial interim budget. He explained that projections for the remainder of the financial year indicate that the present level of funding is insufficient to sustain business at the current level of expenditure and that without additional resource funding being made available and/or savings measures being implemented a deficit of approximately £1,263,000 was projected. He noted that this figure excludes the specific requirement for additional library stock funding.

The Director of Business Support drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 17 June 2020. He highlighted that six of the nine identified risks remained high and explained each risk in detail.

In response to a question regarding the formal process by which Libraries NI could highlight risks to the Department, the Chief Executive confirmed that although Departmental officials had sight of the Corporate Risk Register it was discussed formally and in great detail at the Partnership Meetings (previously known as Accountability Meetings) which were held throughout the year.

Mrs D Kenny, Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, confirmed that the Corporate Risk Register had been considered by Members at the meeting of the Committee held on 17 June 2020. Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval.

On a proposal by Mrs D Kenny, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at June 2020 and noted the Management Report.
11. **UPDATED BUDGET AND SPENDING PLAN 2020/21**  

11.1 The Director of Business Support referred to the paper ‘Updated Budget and Spending Plan 2020/21’.

11.2 He reminded Members that a draft budget and spending plan had been presented to the Board at its meeting held on 23 April 2020 which took account of known ‘normal’ business pressures and estimated the additional impacts and pressures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the information available at the time and a series of planning assumptions the April budget and spending plan had projected a budget deficit of some £652,000 against the indicative financial allocation for the financial year of £26,165,000. This was despite significant initial savings measures having been applied e.g. reducing the library stock budget to a historic and unsustainable low of £500,000.

11.3 The Director of Business Support explained that irrespective of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which has created unprecedented additional pressures the significantly reduced initial allocation would be insufficient to meet the normal operational costs of the organisation throughout the 2020/21 financial year.

11.4 Having reviewed expenditure projections in late June, taking account of actual expenditure to date and a clearer understanding of the scale, scope and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic a revised budget plan now projected a budget deficit of some £1,263,000.

11.5 Members noted the projected deficit excluded a further funding requirement of some £1,500,000 for library stock procurement.

11.6 Members discussed the report at length and considered the updated planning assumptions and updated budget and spending plan 2020/21. Consideration was given to the challenge of maintaining expenditure within allocated budgets and to further potential savings measures. It was recognised that many of the measures relied upon in the past had either already been exhausted or could not be implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic e.g. reducing the stock budget, or the implementation of summer opening hours.

11.7 Following further discussion by Board Members the following was agreed:

- the Chief Executive to escalate the issue to the appropriate level within the Department setting out the financial situation in clear terms
- the Chairperson would also make representations to the DfC Minister on behalf of Libraries NI
- briefing to be prepared providing ‘lines to take’ which could be used by Board Members when advocating on this issue for Libraries NI
- an emergency meeting of the Board to be held in August to update Members on the situation and if required at that time, a paper to be provided at the meeting setting out proposed savings measures.
12. **MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 APRIL 2020**

12.1 The Chairperson reminded Members that at the Board Meeting held on 23 April 2020, the Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs D Kenny had presented an oral report on the meeting of the Committee held on 22 April 2020. At the Board Meeting of 23 April 2020, Members had approved the following documents:

- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2020
- Annual Board Assurance Statement 2019/20
- Corporate Risk Register as at 31 March 2020

12.2 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs D Kenny, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson Councillor G Finlay, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 22 April 2020.

12.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs D Kenny, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson Councillor G Finlay the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Internal Audit Strategy 2020 – 23
- Internal Audit Strategy for Branch and Mobile Libraries 2020/21
- Internal Audit Annual Plan 2020/21

13. **MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 JUNE 2020**

13.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs D Kenny, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020.

13.2 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs D Kenny, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson Councillor G Finlay, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 17 June 2020.

13.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs D Kenny, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson Councillor G Finlay, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Draft Annual Report 2019/20
- Risk Management Report and Review
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Scheme of Delegation
14. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 MAY 2020

14.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Dr M Ward, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2020.

14.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr M Ward, seconded by Councillor G Finlay, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 21 May 2020.

14.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr M Ward, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Engaging with Culture and Creativity Policy
- Information and Learning Services Policy

15. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 MAY 2020

15.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Councillor B Webb, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2020.

15.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee Councillor B Webb, seconded by the Committee Vice-Chairperson Mr N Bodger, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 28 May 2020.

15.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee Councillor B Webb, seconded by the Committee Vice-Chairperson Mr N Bodger, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Student Work Placement Policy
- Recurrent Maintenance and Capital Development Programme 2020/21

16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

16.1 There was no other notified business.
17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 10 September 2020 at 10.30 am either in Lisburn City Library or remotely via video link.

17.2 Members were reminded that it had been agreed to hold an emergency meeting in August to provide a further update on the Budget and Spending Plan 2020/21 and officers would confirm via e-mail when a date had been agreed.

18. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

18.1 The meeting ended at 1.07 pm.

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

Councillor C Mallaghan joined the meeting at 10.46 am

Councillor D Lyons left the meeting at 11.57 am

Mr H Reid left the meeting at 12.45 pm

*During the current Covid-19 pandemic and with remote working in place, these minutes, which were approved at the Board Meeting held on 20 August 2020 are published with an e-signature.*

Signed: ________________________________

Date: ___________ 20 August 2020 ___________________________