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 20 August 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
Councillor Garath Keating
Mrs Deirdre Kenny
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 Adrienne Adair Head of Service
Ms Brenda McGilligan Department for Communities

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Mr Ken Smyth Boardroom Apprentice

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 B McGilligan, Department for Communities (DfC) and Ms A Adair, Head of Service to the meeting.

3.2 He reminded Members, as previously reported, that the term of Mr K Smyth, Boardroom Apprentice would finish at the end of August and wished Mr Smyth, who had been unable to attend the meeting today, every success in the future. He reported that a new Boardroom Apprentice, Ms R Steenson had been appointed from 1 September 2020 and would be invited to the Board Planning Day to be held on 10 September 2020.

3.3 On behalf of the Board, the Chairperson offered condolences to Mr J Peto on the recent passing of his father. Mr Peto thanked the Chairperson and Members for their sympathies.

4. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS**

4.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to correspondence received from Ms M Walls, Director of Culture, DfC regarding the Budget 2021 – 24 process. He explained that the correspondence commissioned an information gathering exercise as part of the Northern Ireland Executive’s budget setting process and reflected the period covered by the UK Spending Review. The Department was seeking information from Arm’s Length Bodies in relation to resource budgets for three years (2021 – 24) and for capital budgets for a four year period to 2024 - 25. He advised that planning, for the moment, was on the basis of the opening baseline budget for 2020/21 and would be rolled forward through the three years with any one-off allocations for 2020/21 removed. Members noted that the deadline for submission of the information was 25 August 2020.

5. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 2 JULY 2020**

5.1 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Dr M Ward, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 2 July 2020 were approved.

6. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 2 JULY 2020**

6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper detailing action taken as a result of discussions at, and decisions of, the Board at the previous
meeting. He noted that all actions were either completed or on the Agenda for further discussion.

7. **UPDATE ON FINANCIAL POSITION 2020 21**  

7.1 The Chief Executive advised Members that as requested at the last Board Meeting held on 2 July 2020 he had written to Ms T Meharg, Permanent Secretary, DfC on 7 July 2020 setting out the difficult financial situation facing Libraries NI in 2020/21. He reported that he had received a positive and supportive response from the Permanent Secretary on 11 August 2020 in which she had given her assurance that DfC would meet the current £1.67m budget deficit.

7.2 Members noted that in light of the Permanent Secretary's assurance a revised budget and spending plan 2020/21 had been prepared on the basis of the initial resource allocation of £26,165,000 being increased by £1,670,000 to £27,835,000.

7.3 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the updated Budget and Spending Plan 2020/21 and explained that although the assurance of an additional £1,670,000 of resource funding was welcome and combined with the initial April allocation provided a sufficient resource funding total to allow a ‘balanced’ budget to be formulated, it did not provide sufficient resources to reverse those savings measures already implemented in April 2020 and did not address the shortfall in the library stock budget.

7.4 He reminded Members that having reduced the stock budget to an all-time low of £500,000 a further £1,500,000 of specific stock funding would be required to provide a meaningful stock resource for the remainder of the financial year. He reported that indications were that a formal October monitoring round would shortly be opened to bids and Libraries NI would endeavour to secure additional stock funding via this route but as substantial financial pressures existed within the public sector as a whole, and competition for funding would be considerable, a positive outcome was not guaranteed.

7.5 Members noted that the Permanent Secretary was clear in her response that Libraries NI must take steps to ensure that further pressures were not incurred in the current financial year and that where possible Libraries NI should endeavour to reduce pressures if possible without substantially impacting service delivery. In order to maintain expenditure within the current revised allocation Libraries NI would need to continue to exercise caution and constraint in managing and allocating resources. The evolving environment brought about by Covid-19 continues to pose many challenges and uncertainties and may require specific responses as the year progresses. Expenditure would be closely monitored and where necessary revisions made to internal allocations to ensure the budget is controlled and service provision maintained.
7.6 Members discussed at length the importance of providing up to date and relevant bookstock for library users. Ms H Osborn, Director of Library Services reported that the use of eBooks and eMagazines had proven to be highly successful during lockdown and demand existed and would continue for new bookstock to be made available. Officers advised that expenditure would be monitored very closely throughout the financial year and that if possible additional internal allocations would be made to increase the resources available for the purchase of stock.

7.7 On a request from Councillor B Webb it was agreed that officers would provide information on the funding required to purchase a meaningful stock resource for the remainder of the financial year.

7.8 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Mr J Peto the Board approved and adopted the revised Budget and Spending Plan 2020/21.

8. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 AUGUST 2020
LNI 04.08.20

8.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Dr M Ward, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 6 August 2020.

8.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr M Ward, seconded by Mr H Reid, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 6 August 2020.

8.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr M Ward, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the Children and Young People’s Services Policy.

8.4 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Dr M Ward, seconded by Councillor G Finlay, the Board approved and adopted the Heritage Policy.

8.5 The Chairperson of the Committee Dr M Ward then drew attention to the discussion of the provision of a Cultural Heritage Service in Armagh which had taken place. She informed the Board that this discussion had taken place ‘In Committee’ and reported that Committee Members had recommended to the Board, as an interim solution, to progress the proposal for a blended approach to the delivery of Cultural Heritage Services in Armagh as follows:

- relocate the Armagh Heritage lending stock to the refurbished Lurgan Library
- supplement the heritage lending stock in the Armagh Branch Library
- offer an appointment only service from the Armagh Regional Admin Centre for non-lending stock
- continue to respond to remote enquiries
8.6 It was noted that this blended approach would in the interim, provide a more accessible, efficient, effective, value for money and sustainable cultural heritage service within County Armagh. It would realise savings in due course through the relinquishing of the lease for the existing Irish and Local Studies premises and, as an interim solution, is consistent with longer term planning for library facilities in Armagh City.

8.7 Dr M Ward referred Members to the Addendum to the minutes of the Services Committee which provided additional detail on two pertinent issues relevant to the proposal and in particular the Armagh City Branch Library i.e. impact of COVID – 19 and social distancing requirements and the loadbearing capacity of the first floor.

8.8 Councillor G Keating asked that his disappointment be recorded as he felt that the local collection belonged in Armagh City Library adding that the core users of the collection would also be disappointed by this decision. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Director of Library Services Ms H Osborn and the Head of Service, Ms A Adair, would liaise with Councillor Keating and keep him informed of developments in relation to this issue.

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

- to relocate the Armagh Heritage lending stock to the refurbished Lurgan Library
- to supplement the heritage lending stock in the Armagh Branch Library
- to offer an appointment only service from the Armagh Regional Admin Centre for non-lending stock
- to continue to respond to remote enquiries.

9. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

9.1 There was no other notified business.

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 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.

11. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

11.1 The meeting ended at 11:35 am.
11.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Councillor Billy Webb joined the meeting at 10:50 am

During the current Covid-19 pandemic and with remote working in place, these minutes, which were approved at the Board Planning Day Event held on 10 September 2020, are published with an e-signature.

Signed: ____________________________

Date: 10 September 2020

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