

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Lisburn City Library and by remote video link (Zoom) on Thursday 11 December 2025 at 11:00 am

PRESENT

Ms Bonnie Anley (IP)	Chairperson
Councillor Roisin Lynch (IP)	Vice-Chairperson

Councillor Alistair Cathcart (IP)

Mr Adrian Driscoll (VL)

Councillor J Gilmour (IP)

Councillor Andrew McAuley (IP)

Councillor Martin McRandal (IP)

Ms Ursula O'Hare (IP)

Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE (IP)

Mr John Peto (VL)

Miss Linda Wilson (IP)

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jim O'Hagan (IP)	Chief Executive
Mr Desi Miskelly (IP)	Director of Business Support
Ms Adrienne Adair (IP)	Director of Library Services
Mr Glenn Beattie (IP)	Head of Marketing and Strategic Communications for Agenda Item 13
Ms Julie Reid (IP)	Head of Service (South and East) for Agenda Item 13

Note: IP denotes 'in-person' attendance, VL denotes 'virtual' attendance

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Apologies were recorded for Councillor R Kinnear

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 Members and staff to the meeting. She drew attention to the training provided by the Northern Ireland Centre for Applied Learning (NICAL) and encouraged those Members who had yet to complete the mandatory training courses to do so as soon as possible. It was agreed that further instructions on accessing the training would be issued to Members.

3.2 On a proposal by Councillor A McAuley, seconded by Councillor M McRandall, the Board agreed to go into Committee.

3.3 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Board agreed to come out of Committee.

3.4 The Chairperson reported that while in Committee Members had received an update in relation to a forthcoming meeting with Minister Lyons, Department for Communities (DfC) and on several capital projects.

3.5 Councillor A Cathcart stated that he had not had any discussions on the matter to be discussed with Minister Lyons outside of Libraries NI.

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:

- Revised Budget Allocations Capital and Resource
- Christmas and New Year Closure
- UK-Ireland 2030 Cultural Co-operation Programme
- Forthcoming Meeting with Minister, 11 December 2025
- Lord Mayor and Chief Executive of Belfast City Council visit to Belfast Central Library, 26 November 2025
- Women's Aid / Sara O'Neill Christmas Card Packing Day, 6 November 2025 at Belfast Central Library which was attended by the First Minister and the Minister for the Economy
- Assembly Questions.

4.2 Members noted that the meeting with the DfC Minister had been rescheduled to 16 December 2025.

4.3 The Chief Executive informed Members that a site visit had taken place to Belfast Stories on 9 December 2025.

4.4 Members congratulated Mr C Boyle, former Permanent Secretary, DfC on his recent retirement and wished him well for the future.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2025
LNI 01.12.25

5.1 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16 October 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2025
LNI 02.12.25

6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting the following:

Item 6.5: Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 3 July 2025, External Board Effectiveness Review

6.2 It was noted that this matter would be discussed further at Agenda Item 8.

Item 7.2: Minutes of the Board Planning Meeting held on 11 September 2025

6.3 Members noted that the feedback from the Board Planning Meeting had been summarised by theme and circulated for information.

Item 8.2: Matters arising from the Board Planning Meeting held on 11 September 2025

6.4 It was noted that a draft statement setting out the Libraries NI position on inclusion and equality principles had been circulated to Board Members for information. Members discussed the draft statement and agreed that it should be forwarded to the Department to be included in the papers for the forthcoming meeting with the Minister.

Item 10.10: Libraries NI Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25

6.5 The Chief Executive confirmed that the Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 had been submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification on 17 October 2025.

Item 11.15: Management Report

6.6 The Chief Executive confirmed that the approved Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 30 September 2025 had been submitted to DfC on 16 October 2025.

Item 16.3: Any other notified business

6.7 It was noted that the Chief Executive's response regarding the draft consultation Package for the Public Libraries Policy had been submitted to DfC on 17 October 2025, and a copy circulated to Board Members for information. In his response the Chief Executive had drawn attention to the tight timescale for the provision of feedback and had reminded DfC of the feedback provided by Members at the Board Planning Day held on 11 September 2025. He had also reiterated the Board's view that the full draft Public Libraries Policy should be subject to consultation.

6.8 In response to a question asking if the Consultation had been issued and was available for completion, the Director of Library Services confirmed clarification and an update on this would be sought from DfC.

7. MANAGEMENT REPORT **LNI 03.12.25**

7.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support briefed the Board on the Management Report as follows:

Key Performance Indicators 2025/26 Quarter 2: July – September 2025

LNI 03.12.25 (i)

7.2 The Chief Executive reported on progress against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) noting that three KPIs were reported as 'Amber' and staff will continue to work towards achieving these targets. Two KPIs were reported as red i.e. target spend of £2.25 per capita on stock resources which is currently at £1.17 per capita. Members noted that this figure would increase following the allocation of additional funding to purchase stock. The other red target was in relation to staff appraisals i.e. 90% of Staff Appraisals to be completed by 30 September 2025 – 82% of appraisals were completed by 30 September, which was equivalent to 91% achievement against the indicator target. It was noted that progress in respect of the other KPIs was in line with expectations at this point in the year.

Business Plan 2025/26: Progress Report: April to September 2025

LNI 03.12.25 (ii)

7.3 The Chief Executive drew attention to the six month update on the Business Plan 2025/26 and reported that progress had been made in respect of the majority of Business Plan targets. He drew attention to those targets which had been reported as 'Red' and provided information on the steps being taken to progress these issues.

7.4 Members discussed the setting of targets in the KPI and Business Plan Reports. It was felt that some of the existing targets e.g. 100,000 for new members might be best set over a span of years. The requirement to balance the purchase of hard copy stock against eBooks was also discussed.

Finance Report: October 2025

LNI 03.12.25 (iii)

7.5 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent spend to October 2025 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 27 November 2025.

7.6 He drew attention to the Resource Expenditure report noting that as at 31 October 2025 a potential year end underspend of £132,700 or 0.4% was projected.

7.7 In respect of the Capital Expenditure the Director of Business Support explained that confirmation had been received of December Monitoring outcomes and the easements and reallocations submitted to DfC in November had now been agreed. The overall capital allocation had been revised to £1,270,000 which would bring expenditure projections to within the <1% underspend margin

permitted. He explained that a budget revision exercise was currently underway and it was anticipated that as a result of this exercise there would be some further internal re-allocation of budgets.

- 7.8 The Board was pleased to note the additional monies allocated by the Department in November 2025 for the purchase of bookstock.
- 7.9 Members noted the report.
- 7.10 As some Board Members had to leave the meeting early it was agreed to modify the running order of the remaining Agenda items to ensure those matters requiring consideration and approval were addressed within the remaining available time.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Items 10 and 11 as follows:

(Item 10 on the Meeting Agenda)

8. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2025 LNI 06.12.25

- 8.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne presented the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025 noting that an oral report of this meeting had been given at the Board Meeting held on 16 October 2025, and at that meeting the Board had approved the following:
 - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2024/25
 - Libraries NI Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25
 - Bi-Annual Assurance Statement, April to September 2025
 - Corporate Risk Register September 2025.
- 8.2 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 15 October 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 8.3 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor A Cathcart, the Board approved and adopted the Amendment to the Internal Audit Annual Plan which had also been considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at the meeting held on 15 October 2025.

(Item 11 on the Meeting Agenda)

9. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2025 LNI 07.12.25

- 9.1 The Vice-Chairperson of the Services Committee, Mr A Driscoll, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025. He drew attention to paragraph 4.1: Directors Business and asked that an amendment be made to the date of the untimely passing of Mr G Hill to 2 November 2025.

- 9.2 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 20 November 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting subject to the amendment at paragraph 9.1 above.
- 9.3 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved and adopted the Review of Room Hire Policy.
- 9.4 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved and adopted the Review of Fees and Charges 2026/27.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 13 as follows:

(Item 13 on the Meeting Agenda)

- 10. PRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK ON BOOK WEEK 2025**
- 10.1 The Chairperson welcomed Mr G Beattie, Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications and Ms J Reid, Head of Service (South and East) to the meeting.
- 10.2 Ms J Reid reminded Members that Book Week had taken place from 20 – 26 October 2025. This year celebrated the 10th anniversary of the partnership between Libraries NI and BBC Northern Ireland. She explained that Book Week is a key event in the Libraries NI calendar which provides an opportunity to celebrate writers, libraries and the important benefits of reading for pleasure through various activities. She recapped on the various events which had taken place and highlighted the authors involved. She also drew attention to 'lessons learned' when planning the event in 2026.
- 10.3 Mr G Beattie informed Members of the various platforms which had included Book Week content such as Facebook, Instagram, BBC iPlayer and Sounds. He reported that 120 different designs had been created for these platforms to include imagery and design. Mr Beattie then drew attention to the attendance at the events and commended those Board Members who had attended or visited a library on 'Love your Library' day. Mr Beattie also showed some key social media, podcast and YouTube statistics from the week including the 95% growth in Libraries NI podcast downloads over the previous month.
- 10.4 The Chairperson thanked Mr G Beattie and Ms J Reid for their presentation and congratulated them on a successful Book Week 2025 event.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 8 and 9 as follows

(Item 8 on the Meeting Agenda)

11. BOARD EFFECTIVENESS 2025/26 AND AN UPDATE ON EXTERNAL REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS LNI 04.12.25

11.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Board Effectiveness Review 2025/26 and reported that the Effectiveness checklist would be completed in draft and brought back to Members for review at the Board Meeting to be held on 12 February 2026. He drew attention to the pro forma at Appendix 3 which can be used by Board Members to submit additional views or comments on any matter relating to the review of Board/Committee Effectiveness. He asked that completed forms or other comments be returned to him no later than 16 January 2026.

11.2 Members noted that individual Committees had started or were about to start reviewing their effectiveness, including the continued relevance of the Schemes of Delegation and the process should be completed early in the New Year. A draft Action Plan based on all of the reviews would be presented to the Board at its meeting to be held on 12 February 2026.

11.3 He reminded Members that a key action arising from last year's Review of Board Effectiveness was to undertake an External Review of Board Effectiveness in line with the requirements of the Partnership Agreement. He confirmed that this process was underway with a template to guide the process having been prepared and completed, a survey of Board Members and Senior Management Team Members had also been completed, and an independent reviewer had been identified to carry out an external assessment. It is hoped the outcome of that assessment will be available at the next Board meeting to feed into and help inform the completion of the Board's Review of Effectiveness.

(Item 9 on the Meeting Agenda)

12. BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2026/27 LNI 05.12.25

12.1 The Director of Business Support reported that there remained significant uncertainty as to the financial and funding outcomes for 2026/27. The 'budgeting' processes at Departmental level were underway and Officers were engaging with colleagues in DfC on this matter. The Libraries NI position paper 'Resourcing the Public Library Service' which provides evidence and information in support of a realistic and sustainable level of resource and capital funding for the 2026/27 year and which was previously submitted to DfC in January and May 2025 would be updated and re-submitted before Christmas. He reported that the matter of potentially introducing multi-year budgeting had been raised in discussions with DfC with the possibility for indicative three year resource and four / five year capital funding envelopes being rolled out from 2026/27. However, no definitive approach had yet been agreed by the NI Executive on funding approaches for 2026/27.

12.2 In the event further information is received from the Department, a more detailed briefing would be brought to Members at the February Board Meeting.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 12 as follows:

(Item 12 on the Meeting Agenda)

**13. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2025**

LNI 08.12.25

- 13.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Miss L Wilson, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025.
- 13.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson Councillor R Lynch, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 27 November 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 13.3 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Libraries NI Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2024/25.
- 13.4 On a proposal by Councillor A McAuley, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the Libraries NI Five Year Review of Equality Scheme.
- 13.5 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, the Board approved and adopted the Asset Management Plan 2025 – 30.

Members agreed to return to the running order of the Agenda at Item 14 as follows:

14. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

- 14.1 There was no other notified business.
- 14.2 The Chairperson thanked Members and Officers for attending the meeting and wished all present the compliments of the season.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 15.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 12 February 2026 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library.

16. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 16.1 The meeting ended at 2:13 pm.

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

Mrs U O'Hare arrived at 11:15 am

Mrs U O'Hare left at 1:31 pm

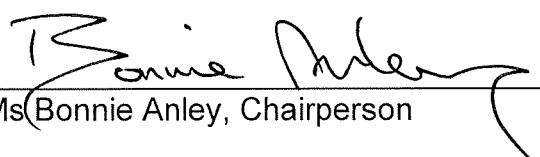
Mrs W Osborne left at 1: 35 pm

Mr A Driscoll left at 1:45 pm

Mr J Peto left at 1:45 pm

Councillor A Cathcart left at 2:11 pm

Signed:



Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date:

12 February 2026

