

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held in Lurgan Library
on Thursday, 15 September 2022 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Councillor Cathal Mallaghan	Chairperson
Professor Bernard Cullen	
Councillor Julie Gilmour	
Ms Deirdre Kenny	
Mr John Peto	Vice-Chairperson

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
Ms Adrienne Adair	Head of Service
Ms Margaret Bell	Head of Service
Mr Sean Beattie	Deputy Head of Service
Mr Tim Neeson	Assets Manager
Ms Ciara Gault	Service Development Manager
Ms Brid Steele	Service Development Manager
Ms Lily Gillis	Senior Services Manager
Ms Stefani Millar	Boardroom Apprentice
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

The Chairperson welcomed Members and staff to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Mr H Reid and Dr M Ward.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest associated with any item on the agenda, either now or at the relevant stage during the meeting. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

3.1 There was no Chairperson's business.

4. OFFICERS' BUSINESS SC.01.09.22

4.1 Ms M Bell, Head of Service referred to the report that had been circulated and gave an overview of the benefits of the summer opening hours that were in operation from 27 June to 3 September 2022.

4.2 Ms M Bell confirmed that Libraries NI will observe the national bank holiday and all libraries will close as a mark of respect on the day of the State Funeral to allow staff time to mark Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's passing and to commemorate Her reign.

4.3 The Head of Service reported on the reopening of Limavady Library following a refurbishment which cost approximately £225,000 and included new LED lighting, heating and air-conditioning and a paint refresh. Additional furniture was purchased to enhance customer areas and the staff room area was also improved. The reopening of the library and the improved environment was greatly received by staff and customers.

4.4 Ms M Bell informed the Committee that the triennial customer survey commenced in 34 libraries on 12 September and will finish on 1 October 2022. The survey, which is available online and in hard copy will measure customers' satisfaction with the service, Libraries NI's stock offer, IT and online resources and how Libraries NI communicates with users and non-users. Ms M Bell confirmed that the survey findings will be available before the end of 2022 and will be used in planning for 2023/24.

4.5 The Head of Service reported on the planned closure for Christmas and New Year 2022/23, that is, that all libraries, Regional Admin Centres, the Mobile Library and Homecall Service will close from 5:00pm on Friday 23 December 2022 to Monday 2 January 2023 inclusive with services reopening to the public on Tuesday 3 January 2023.

4.6 Ms M Bell then referred to the Summer Reading Challenge 2022 that completed on Saturday 3 September 2022. During July and August a variety of supporting events were held in libraries including 11 workshops with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Ambassadors, four coding workshops with Nerve Centre Belfast and 18 workshops with Dog's Trust. Story Camps on a science theme with Vicky McFarland from the Armstrong Storytelling Trust were also delivered by Zoom. At the end of the challenge 13,682 children had registered and 160,264 books were read.

4.7 Ms M Bell then reported that the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (AOP) donated 200 copies of The Big Book of Experiments and Bright Ideas, an

illustrated children's science book which contains experiments to try at home. The book was written by staff at AOP and was inspired by the success of the Planetarium's 'Science@Home' online programme, which AOP introduced during lockdown to keep the public informed about the world of science. Armagh City Library in partnership with AOP staff delivered three Science Experiment Workshops and library staff then delivered four story time sessions at the Planetarium. The successful partnership will continue this year with a series of workshops and story times.

- 4.8 The Head of Service then described Elmers' Big Belfast Trail 2022, a family friendly art trail hosted by Belfast City Council and a collaboration between Northern Ireland Hospice, Wild in Art and Anderson Press to raise funds for the Northern Ireland Hospice. To tie in with this, Libraries NI celebrated Elmer the Elephant story times in libraries across Northern Ireland during July and August.
- 4.9 Ms M Bell referred to the STEM Ambassador programme, managed by STEM Learning, a provider of education and careers support in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. She reported that in Northern Ireland there are over 1,000 volunteers who connect with young people in schools, colleges and out of school groups to inspire them to become the next generation of STEM professionals. Libraries NI worked in partnership with STEM Ambassadors and offered activities in eight libraries for children and young people to celebrate World Book Day and 11 workshops to support the Gadgeteers Summer Reading Challenge. Staff from Libraries NI's Children and Young People's Team also delivered three storytelling training sessions in January 2022 to STEM Ambassadors prior to the delivery of the above events.
- 4.10 The Head of Service highlighted the following festivals that took place throughout the summer which were supported by Libraries NI through local branch activities:
- The Red Sails Festival, Portstewart
 - Creggan 75, Derry
 - Fairythorn Festival, Kilrea
 - Féile an Phobail, Belfast
 - EastSide Arts Festival, Belfast
 - Pride Festivals, Belfast and Derry.
- 4.11 The Head of Service gave an overview of Compassionate Communities NI, a public health approach to palliative and end of life care to improve death experiences for everyone in Northern Ireland by increasing death literacy, death preparedness and develop compassionate communities. She reported that the group has already provided two collections of 18 Death Positive books in Derry Central and Omagh libraries and is planning a launch of a third collection in Newry City Library on 13 September during Palliative Care Week (11 - 17 September).
- 4.12 Furthermore, Ms M Bell reported that Libraries NI has been working with CRUSE NI on books on loss and grief for children. Libraries NI has a pilot collection of

books for children and young people dealing with bereavement in Derry Central and Omagh libraries. These libraries have been selected as they already hold the 'Death Positive Library' collection for adults. Libraries NI has designed and shared with CRUSE NI, a flyer to highlight the availability of the books which will be promoted on Libraries NI's website and posted on social media platforms.

- 4.13 Ms M Bell described the partnership Libraries NI has developed with Make the Call Wraparound Service to deliver benefit entitlement clinics in six libraries, Bangor Carnegie, Derry Central, Grove, Omagh, Ormeau Road and Rathcoole. Make the Call Community Outreach Officers will be based in the libraries offering appointments to support and guide the public through their potential entitlements to benefits, support and services. Following the initial round of clinics consideration will be given to widening the initiative to include other libraries in the network. The first clinic was launched in Ormeau Road Library on 11 August by Department for Communities Minister, Deirdre Hargey.
- 4.14 The Head of Service informed Members of GamCare UK, the leading provider of information, advice and support for anyone affected by gambling. She reported that Libraries NI has linked with GamCare UK to increase awareness of services available by providing information in libraries and signposting the public as appropriate. Staff briefing sessions on signs to look out for and where to direct young people and children who may be impacted have been arranged for September and there is potential for libraries to host awareness sessions for parents in the future.
- 4.15 Ms M Bell reported on Reachdeck, formerly known as Browsealoud, a speech, reading and translation software available on Libraries NI's public computers making content accessible for people with dyslexia, low literacy and mild visual impairments as well as a translation tool for over 100 languages. Libraries NI has set targets to promote Reachdeck to groups and organisations including RNIB, Red Cross, Welcome to NI, NOW and Community Planning partners and is also planning to develop user case studies to demonstrate the value of the software.
- 4.16 The Head of Service highlighted recent successful events with local writers Sharon Dempsey, James Murphy, Kelly Creighton and Simon Maltman in Lisburn Road and Ballyhackamore libraries to celebrate Crime Reading Month in June 2022.
- 4.17 Ms M Bell reminded Members of the Story Trails initiative, part of the UnBoxed project (previously Festival UK 22) which sought to capture life in Omagh (past and present) through the stories of local residents. She reported that the event which took place on 1 and July 2022 was a huge success with over 1,300 visitors attending over the two days including local stakeholders such as the Chairperson and staff from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and representatives from DAERA and the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium. Participants were able to watch and listen to stories, go on an augmented reality walking tour of the town and become immersed in a virtual reality experience through a Virtual Reality

Headset. To complement the “Stories” library staff delivered a number of family activities.

- 4.18 The Head of Service referred to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) 87th World Library and Information Congress that took place in Dublin from 26 - 29 July and which Libraries NI staff attended and participated in. She confirmed that a presentation on the Congress will be made at the November Services Committee meeting.
- 4.19 Ms M Bell drew attention to the following events and gave an overview of Libraries NI’s participation:
- European Heritage Open Days, 5 – 11 September 2022
 - Macmillan Coffee Morning, 30 September 2022
 - Positive Ageing Month, October 2022
 - Get Online Week, 17 – 23 October 2022.
- 4.20 The Head of Service then reported on recent meetings attended. She referred to a meeting with the Chairperson of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council held on 8 June 2022 and a meeting with the Assistant Director of the Education Authority held on 9 August 2022.
- 4.21 Ms M Bell highlighted the following recent library reports:
- Public Libraries and Literacy Recovery
 - Libraries and the Cost of Living Crisis
 - Helping jobseekers help themselves: research into the role of public library services in improving employment outcomes.
- 4.22 The Chairperson thanked Ms M Bell for a very comprehensive report.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2022 SC.02.09.22

- 5.1 On a proposal by Ms D Kenny, seconded by Mr J Peto, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 There were no matters arising.

7. FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24 SC.03.09.22

- 7.1 Mr S Beattie presented the Fees and Charges 2023/24 report, explaining that they are reviewed annually. He drew attention to the main change, the removal of the request charge and explained the rationale and factors influencing the recommendation.

- 7.2 The Deputy Head of Service highlighted the lost book fee which children under the age of five are currently exempt from. In considering whether this should be extended to all primary school children, he reported that further analysis is required to identify if concern over lost book charges is a barrier to use. He therefore recommended that the Customer Groups Team and Online Support Services Team investigate this during 2022/23 in preparation for the next annual review of fees and charges.
- 7.3 The Committee discussed the Fees and Charges and highlighted some concern over the fee for Wi-Fi use by non-members. It was agreed that the income should be monitored with a view to considering this as part of the next annual review.
- 7.4 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Fees and Charges 2023/24 to the Board.

8. REVIEW OF ROOM HIRE POLICY SC.04.09.22

- 8.1 Ms C Gault introduced the Room Hire Policy explaining the purpose of the policy, to define the conditions that need to be met to facilitate the use and/or hire of library premises. She reported that the policy was in operation for twelve years and was presented to the Committee in line with the policy review cycle.
- 8.2 The Service Development Manager confirmed that there were no significant changes as a result of the policy review and that minor amendments were made to reflect organisational changes and add relevant policies and procedures.
- 8.3 On a proposal by Ms D Kenny, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Room Hire Policy to the Board.

9. LIBRARIES NI: TOWARDS A NEW MEMBERSHIP MODEL SC.05.09.22

- 9.1 Mr S Beattie presented the report on membership recapping on the context and background leading to the research undertaken following the membership drive in 2021/22.
- 9.2 The Deputy Head of Service outlined the factors influencing Libraries NI's membership and the actions considered leading to the proposals:
- to move to a model of having one form of membership
 - to no longer require proof of identification/address as part of the joining process
 - to review the approach to contacting borrowers in January to March 2023, following the results of the Customer Survey
 - to pilot library membership as a requirement to attend library events in three libraries and one online event before February 2023.

- 9.3 The Services Committee discussed the implications of becoming a library member without providing proof of address. They also highlighted the cost of eBooks and considered that members from outside of Northern Ireland could become members. It was agreed that this would be monitored.
- 9.4 The Services Committee requested that instead of library membership being required to attend a library event that priority was given to library members and that Libraries NI would encourage non-members to join.
- 9.5 On a proposal by Ms D Kenny, seconded by Mr J Peto, subject to the above amendment outlined at 9.4, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the New Membership Model to the Board.

10. BOOK WEEK NI

- 10.1 Ms L Gillis, Senior Services Manager with responsibility for Stock and Reader Development, provided the Committee with an overview of plans for Book Week NI, an annual programme of events delivered in partnership with BBC Northern Ireland to celebrate all things libraries, books and reading. She reported that this year Book Week NI would take place on 17 to 23 October 2022, that the overall theme would be “Read All About It” and that libraries across the country will be encouraged to promote library services and deliver events to support the programme.
- 10.2 The Services Development Manager drew attention to the daily themes including feel good stories, children, Love your Library Day, short stories, crime authors and classics. She then described a number of activities to promote each of the daily themes.
- 10.3 Ms L Gillis went on to describe some of the highlights of this year’s Book Week NI specifically a series of events featuring the work of high-profile local and national authors which will be delivered in several libraries, four of which will be live streamed and recorded. She also referred to a recent email encouraging Board Members to get involved as Book Week Ambassadors.
- 10.4 The Services Committee thanked Ms L Gillis for the update.

11. CUSTOMER GROUPS AND AREA PRESENTATION

- 11.1 Ms B Steele introduced herself as the Service Development Manager with responsibility for Customer Groups throughout the organisation and an operational responsibility for branches, mobiles and homecall in the Mid and East Antrim and Antrim and Newtownabbey Council areas. She went on to give a summary of the libraries in each area in terms of opening hours and highlighted a number of successful partnerships and initiatives individual to specific libraries.

- 11.2 The Service Development Manager outlined the purpose of the Customer Groups team to provide an equitable and inclusive service for as many groups and users as possible and highlighted the priority areas as identified in the Service Plan 2022/23 as:
- children and young people
 - Library of Sanctuary
 - homeless
 - dementia
 - autism.
- 11.3 Ms B Steele explained the Belfast City of Sanctuary initiative to promote and build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary, this includes refugees, asylum seekers and new communities. She reported that a Library of Sanctuary was being piloted in Ormeau Road Library and gave a flavour of the stakeholder engagement and events to support the pilot.
- 11.4 The Service Development Manager then gave an overview of the Customer Group Team plans to support the other priority areas. She drew attention to the success of the Summer Reading Challenge where the service plan targets of loans and participants was exceeded. Ms B Steele then informed the Committee of working groups that have been set up to enhance the offer for people with no fixed abode and people with dementia or autism and their families.
- 11.5 The Services Committee thanked Ms B Steele for a very encouraging presentation.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 There was no other business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would take place on Thursday, 17 November 2022 at 10:30am, venue to be confirmed.

14. TOUR OF LURGAN LIBRARY

- 14.1 Mr Tim Neeson, Assets Manager, gave the Committee an overview of the Lurgan Library refurbishment project.

15. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 15.1 The meeting ended at 12:30pm and was followed by a tour of Lurgan Library.
- 15.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.

Signed: Councillor Cathal Mallaghan

Date: 17 November 2022