

## **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 28 April 2022 at 10:30 am

#### **PRESENT**

Professor Bernard Cullen  
Councillor Julie Gilmour

Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson

Councillor Cheryl Brownlee  
Alderman Thomas Burns  
Councillor Alistair Cathcart  
Mrs Deirdre Kenny  
Councillor D Lyons  
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan  
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE  
Mr John Peto  
Mr Harry Reid  
Dr Margaret Ward  
Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP  
Miss Linda Wilson

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr Jim O'Hagan  
Mr Desi Miskelly  
Mr Sean Beattie  
Ms Angela Hodkinson

Chief Executive  
Director of Business Support  
Deputy Head of Service  
Boardroom Apprentice

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Glenn Finlay  
Ms Adrienne Adair

Director of Library Services

No observer from the Department for Communities (DfC) 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 informed Members of the following:

- that it was his sad duty to report the death of Mr Jim Ward, husband of Trisha Ward, Director of Library Services. On behalf of Board Members and Officers, the Chairperson extended his condolences to the Director of Library Services and her family. Members also noted that Mrs Ward was due to retire on 30 April 2022 and extended every best wish for the future
- Mr N Bodger had resigned from the Libraries NI Board effective from 31 March 2022. Mr Bodger had taken up a post as an independent member on the DfC Departmental Management Board. On behalf of Members and Officers the Chairperson thanked Mr Bodger for his work and contribution to the Libraries NI Board and the Business Support Committee in particular
- membership of the Business Support Committee has decreased in recent months especially for non-Councillor Board Members. Members were asked to consider volunteering to become a Member of this Committee. The Chief Executive confirmed that Mrs W Osborne had agreed to join this Committee and on a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board Professor B Cullen, seconded by Alderman T Burns the Board approved Mrs W Osborne to become a member of the Business Support Committee.

### **4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

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

- Covid-19 – Service Response and Update
- New Membership Cards designed for children and younger library members
- Update on Budget and Spending Plan 2022/23
- Update on Hybrid Meetings Equipment
- Visit by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall
- Harkin Summit, Belfast, 7 and 8 June 2022
- Ukrainian Refugees Coming to Northern Ireland
- Department for Communities – Senior Stocktake Meeting
- Temporary Arrangements to cover Director of Library Services Post
- Assembly Questions

4.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Health Minister had announced that all Covid-19 legal restrictions in Northern Ireland would be replaced by guidance effective from 15 February 2022 and as a result Libraries NI has updated its

guidance and libraries are now returning to a more normal operating environment.

4.3 Councillor B Webb referred to the update on the temporary arrangements to cover the Director of Library Services Post and suggested that the Board go into Committee at the end of the meeting to discuss this issue. The Chairperson agreed.

4.4 The Chief Executive reported that DfC had indicated Departmental Officials would only attend the meetings of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee unless there was a specific reason or need for them to attend the Board Meetings.

4.5 Members noted the report.

**5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2022**  
**LNI 01.04.22**

5.1 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 10 February 2022 were approved.

**6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2022**  
**LNI 02.04.22**

6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting that an update would be provided on the following issue.

Item 7.3: Draft Annual Business Plan 2022/23

6.2 Members noted that this item had been completed and that a copy of the draft Annual Business Plan 2022/23 had been forwarded to DfC on 7 March 2022. As yet a response has not been received.

**7. INDICATIVE FINANCIAL ALLOCATION 2022/23: PROPOSED SPENDING PLAN**  
**LNI 03.04.22**

7.1 The Director of Business Support introduced this report and informed Members that in the absence of the Northern Ireland Executive in early 2022 and with the commencement of the local Assembly election process the normal public sector resource budget setting and allocation processes could not be implemented ahead of the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year. Consequently contingency arrangements have been put in place by the Finance Minister and Department of Finance (DoF) to enable public services to be maintained.

7.2 He explained that the approach adopted by central government has been that Departmental resource baselines would in the first instance remain



unchanged for 2022/23 reflecting the 2021/22 opening baseline position. DfC in extending the principle of this approach to the ALBs it supports has provided Libraries NI with an indicative resource allocation for 2022/23 of £29,125,000. This is based on the 2021/22 opening baseline of £28,135,000 plus some £990,000 aimed at addressing additional inescapable pressures.

7.3 Members noted that as budgets had not been agreed nor set at Executive or Departmental level Libraries NI as an ALB could not technically set a budget for the organisation at this time. However, in light of the indicative allocation provided and the authority to spend conferred by DfC a Proposed Spending Plan had been developed so that service delivery could continue with a view to returning to the matter later in the year to agree and approve a resource budget for the organisation.

7.4 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the proposed Spending Plan which had been developed on the basis of the indicative resource allocation of £29,125,000. He explained that it provided detail of the planning assumptions applied and the proposed spending profile required for the organisation to continue to deliver core services while remaining within the current indicative resource allocation envelope.

7.5 In response to a question from Councillor B Webb in relation to the installation of solar panels on library buildings, the Director of Business Support confirmed that the Assets Manager was exploring potential alternative funding sources which could facilitate this type of project.

7.6 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Mrs D Kenny the Board approved and adopted the Proposed Spending Plan for 2022/23 as a framework within which expenditure would be monitored and controlled until such times as a formal budget proposal could be brought forward for consideration.

## **8. REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 APRIL 2022**

8.1 In the absence of the Committee Chairperson, Councillor G Finlay, Mrs W Osborne, Vice-Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee provided an oral report of the Committee meeting which she had chaired on 27 April 2022. She noted that the formal minutes of the meeting would be available at the next Board Meeting to be held on 7 July 2022. She confirmed that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had recommended approval of the following three items to the Board:

- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2022
- Annual Board Assurance Statement 2021/22
- Corporate Risk Register (March 2022)

8.2 The Vice-Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee also highlighted the following items that were presented at the meeting:

- prior to the Committee meeting, the annual bi-lateral meeting had taken place with the Head of Internal Audit to discuss risk, control and governance. The Head of Internal Audit had given the Committee his assurance on these matters and confirmed that there had been no impairment to the independence of Internal Audit and that appropriate resources and support were in place to facilitate Internal Audit to carry out its responsibilities
- seven Internal Audit Reports had been considered by the Committee
- the External Audit Strategy for 2021/22 had been presented to the Committee
- the Internal Audit Draft Annual Report 2021/22 had been presented to the Committee and the Head of Internal Audit had confirmed that a sufficient number of audits had been completed during the year to allow him to provide a satisfactory opinion on the risk, control and governance framework in Libraries NI
- a draft of the Governance Statement, for inclusion in the 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts, had been considered and noted
- the Internal Audit Strategy 2022 - 25, the Internal Audit Strategy for Branch and Mobile Libraries 2022/23 and the Internal Audit Annual Plan 2022/23 had been considered and would be recommended to the Board for approval.

8.3 Members noted the report.

## 9. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 04.04.22

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

### Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022)

LNI 04.04.22 (i)

9.2 The Chief Executive presented the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2022 and drew attention in particular to Section 2: Board and Committees, Section 3: Risk Management and Section 5: Financial Planning and Monitoring. He also drew attention to those areas of the Statement which had been marked 'Working towards Compliance'.

9.3 Mrs W Osborne, Vice-Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee confirmed that the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at the meeting held on 27 April 2022 and that Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval.



9.4 On a proposal by the Vice-Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Alderman T Burns, having exercised its challenge function and received the required assurances from the Accounting Officer, the Board was content to approve the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2022.

9.5 Members noted the signed Statement would be forwarded to the Department for their records.

9.6 Annual Board Assurance Statement 2021/22 LNI 04.04.22 (ii)  
The Chairperson presented the Annual Board Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2022 drawing attention in particular to the 'Issues' section. He noted that the document had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 27 April 2022. At that meeting Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval.

9.7 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, seconded by Miss L Wilson, Members approved the Chairperson's Annual Board Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2022.

9.8 Members noted the signed Statement would also be forwarded to the Department for their records.

9.9 Corporate Risk Register LNI 04.04.22 (iii)  
The Director of Business Support drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Risk Management Group at its meeting held on 5 April 2022 and subsequently by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 27 April 2022.

9.10 He noted that two risks (Risk 1: Participation and Relevance and Risk 6: Planning) remain high despite control measures being implemented. He explained that the organisation was in a relatively stable environment despite on-going challenges in relation to long term planning, resourcing and supply issues and the lack of a confirmed budget.

9.11 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Dr M Ward, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at March 2022.

9.12 Finance Reports: February 2022 LNI 04.04.22 (iv)  
The Director of Business Support informed Members that having had sight of the provisional March expenditure reports that he was content the projections made in the February finance reports remained valid. He referred to the Recurrent Report noting that an underspend of £284,000 (0.9%) was being projected at year end which was within the 1% tolerance limit. He then reported on the Capital Report noting that an underspend of £311,000 (9.4%) was being reported at year end. He explained that this figure was outside the 1% tolerance limit and although disappointing was largely due to orders for electric vehicles being cancelled by the supplier close to the end of the financial year and other supply chain issues preventing completion of projects.

9.13 Members noted the Finance Reports for February 2022.

**10. MINUTES OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE HELD ON  
8 FEBRUARY 2022 LNI 05.04.22**

10.1 The Chairperson of the Information Systems Committee, Professor B Cullen presented the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2022.

10.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Professor B Cullen, seconded by Councillor B Webb, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Information Systems Committee held on 8 February 2022.

**11. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 MARCH 2022  
LNI 06.04.22**

11.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2022.

11.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Dr M Ward, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 24 March 2022.

11.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Dr M Ward, the Board approved and adopted the:

- Draft Rural Needs Annual Report
- Review of the Partnership Policy

11.4 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Board approved and adopted the:

- Review of the Social Media Policy.

**12. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON  
31 MARCH 2022 LNI 07.04.22**

12.1 The Vice-Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Alderman T Burns, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2022.

12.2 On a proposal by the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee Alderman T Burns, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 31 March 2022.

12.3 On a proposal by the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee Alderman T Burns, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Board approved and adopted the:



- Freedom of Information Policy Review
- Smoke Free Workplace Policy Review
- Procurement Policy Review

**13. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

- 13.1 Officers withdrew from the meeting.
- 13.2 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Councillor A Cathcart Members agreed to go into Committee.
- 13.3 On a proposal by Councillor A Cathcart, seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, Members agreed to come out of Committee.
- 13.4 The Chairperson reported that while in Committee Members discussed the situation regarding temporary arrangements to cover the Director of Library Services post and the ongoing delay in resolving the SMT pay issue.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**


- 14.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 7 July 2022 at 10.30 am in Lisburn City Library or remotely via video link.

**15. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

- 15.1 The meeting ended at 12.18 pm.
- 15.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Councillor A Cathcart joined the meeting at 10.33 am  
 Councillor D Lyons joined the meeting at 10.33 am

Councillor D Lyons left the meeting at 11.03 am and re-joined at 11.04 am  
 Councillor C Mallaghan left the meeting at 11.43 and re-joined at 11.44 am  
 Councillor C Brownlee left at 11.30 am

Signed:   
 Professor Bernard Cullen, Chairperson

Date: 07.07.2022