LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 29 January 2026 at 10:30am

(Hybrid via Video Link and in person at Lisburn City Library)

VL – Attendance via video link

IP – Attendance in person

PRESENT

Miss Linda Wilson (IP)	Chairperson
Ms Bonnie Anley (IP)	Chairperson of Libraries NI Board
Councillor Martin McRandal (IP)	Vice-Chairperson
Councillor Roisin Lynch (VL)	
Ms Ursula O'Hare (VL)	
Councillor Julie Gilmour (IP)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jim O'Hagan (IP)	Chief Executive
Mr Desi Miskelly (IP)	Director of Business Support
Mrs Jacqui McKinstry (IP)	Head of Human Resources
Mr Tim Neeson (IP)	Assets Manager
Mrs Rita McNamee (IP)	Finance Manager
Mr Desi Curry (IP)	Head of ICU/ICT

OBSERVERS

Ms Deborah Reynolds	Assistant Director, Corporate Governance and Assurance, NI Fire and Rescue Service

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms D Reynolds, Assistant Director, Corporate Governance and Assurance, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) who was attending as an Observer in her role as assisting Libraries NI in carrying out its External Board Effectiveness Review.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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.

2.2 Ms B Anley informed the Committee that she was also a Board Member of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

2.3 No other interests were declared.

3 CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

3.1 There was no Chairperson's business.

4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS **BSC.01.01.26**

4.1 The Director of Business Support reported that Belfast Central Library had suffered damage during Storm Chandra, the rainwater drainage system had become blocked in the Victorian part of the building and substantial water had made its way down through the building to the ground floor. The library was closed, and work was underway to re-open as soon as possible.

4.2 Miss L Wilson enquired how long the library was likely to be closed and if the valuable collections had been damaged.

4.3 The Assets Manager reported the library would likely be closed for a week and may then reopen in phases. The roof was sound, flooding was caused by a drainage problem when a pipe became choked with the volume of water, this part of the building was listed which limited changes which could be made.

4.4 The Director of Business Support advised that the roof on this Victorian building had been replaced approximately 13 years ago, and the fine/valuable book collections had not been impacted by the flooding.

4.5 The Chief Executive reported that he had visited Belfast Central Library, water had entered the building through the corner of the roof, there was damage to flooring, furniture and computer equipment and he would keep the Committee updated.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND POSITION OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON

4.6 The Director of Business Support advised that the current Chairperson had completed her two-year term of office, the Committee was therefore required to elect a new Chairperson. These positions should rotate between elected and independent members, assuming the current Vice Chairperson (Councillor M McRandal) took up the Chairperson role then a new Vice Chairperson should be elected from the independent members. Only one member was eligible, Ms U O'Hare, as she was Vice Chairperson of ARAC it would not be appropriate for her to also be Vice Chairperson of this Committee. The Director of Business Support suggested that the Committee consider election of the Chairperson but delay electing a Vice Chairperson and highlight issues relating to Committee membership to the Board.

4.7 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the ratio of independent and elected members on the Board; noting that every member would have to take a chair in future and this should be reflected in the selection process.

4.8 The Chief Executive advised that there were six councillor members and five independent members on the Board plus the Chairperson, in the next year ten of the twelve members' terms would end, it would likely be necessary to move members around and this would be discussed with the Board.

4.9 Ms B Anley reported that there would be an interview panel for a new board members in the spring.

4.10 Ms U O'Hare enquired if co-opting members would address the immediate issue.

4.11 The Chief Executive advised that co-opting was made available when specific expertise, skills or knowledge was required.

4.12 The Director of Business Support advised that there were limitations on co-opted members which would not allow them to hold a position of office.

4.13 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, Councillor M McRandal was nominated for the position of Chairperson. Subject to ratification by the Board Councillor McRandal to take up the position effective from the date of the next scheduled Business Support Committee on 26 March 2026.

4.14 The Committee noted that in making its report to the Board (February 2026) it would highlight the issues relating to Committee membership and the balance between elected and independent members and if necessary, seek direction from the Board in resolving the matter.

DRAFT BUDGET 2026-2029/30 - UPDATE

4.15 The Director of Business Support reported that the Finance Minister had published proposals for a draft budget for 2026 - 2029/30, proposing departmental allocations for day-to-day spending for three years and capital investment for four years. There was no indication of how this would filter down to Libraries NI, it was likely to be another challenging financial year. Libraries NI had a process in place setting out the Organisation's funding requirements.

UPDATE – PROPOSALS TO REPLACE DEFECTIVE FAÇADE ELEMENTS AT BANGOR CARNEGIE LIBRARY

4.16 The Director of Business Support advised that following the Committee's discussions in September regarding the emerging issues with access to Bangor Carnegie Library a scheme had been developed proposing replacement of the glazed façade of the library. An info graphic was circulated showing the proposed replacement façade.

4.17 Ms B Anley enquired if there were any listed building issues?

4.18 The Director of Business Support advised that while the façade was not part of the original Carnegie building appropriate Listed Building Consent would be required prior to any works being undertaken.

4.19 Members noted the estimated cost of the project and expressed their concern as to whether the proposal offered the best value solution. Members also noted that any significant alteration to the appearance of this high profile building was likely to be met with opposition.

4.20 The Chief Executive advised that alternative options would have to be considered further.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2025 BSC.02.01.26

5.1 The Chief Executive advised that he had been made aware of several amendments that were required to the draft minutes and suggested they be reviewed and updated draft minutes be returned to the March Committee meeting for approval.

5.2 Members enquired as to the level of detail recorded in committee minutes.

5.3 The Chief Executive advised that minutes should reflect the position of the board or committee, however there was also the ability to record individual comments.

5.4 Miss L Wilson commented that the Board had sight of and adopted an as read version of minutes.

5.5 It was agreed that the amendments to the Committee minutes of 27 November 2025 would be brought to the March 2026 meeting for approval, and would then go to the Board in April. On 16 February 2026 the Board would be advised that the 'as read' November 2025 minutes were being reviewed and would be provided in April, a copy of the November Business Support Minutes would not be provided to the Board in February.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2025 BSC.03.01.26

6.1 The Director of Business Support advised that there were five matters arising

The Lone Working Policy would be addressed under Agenda Item 8

The Committee/Board Effectiveness Review 2025/26 would be addressed under Agenda Item 7

On the recommendation of the Business Support Committee the Board had at its December meeting approved and adopted the

- Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2024/25. The Report, including revisions suggested by the Committee had been formally submitted to the Equality Commission

- Equality Scheme Five Year Review Report. The refreshed Equality Scheme had been published and the Equality Commission informed of the review outcomes and non-substantive updates applied to the Scheme

- Asset Management Strategic Plan 2025/30.

7 COMMITTEE/BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2025/26 BSC.04.01.26

7.1 Miss L Wilson advised that the annual committee effectiveness review process had commenced at the November 2025 Committee meeting; in order to meet the reporting timeframe a report and action plan (if required) would be brought to the Board on 12 February 2026, therefore the Committee was required to have completed its own effectiveness review at this meeting. Consequently, the Committee were asked to: -

1. consider the current Scheme of Delegation, confirm that it remained relevant and appropriate or advise of revisions

2. consider the draft Effectiveness Review with a view to agreeing a combined response representative of the view of the Committee, identifying any actions to be brought forward for inclusion in the Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan.

7.2 No changes were proposed to the Scheme of Delegation.

7.3 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Ms B Anley, the Scheme of Delegation was confirmed as remaining relevant and appropriate and no revisions were required.

7.4 The Director of Business Support reported that he had received feedback regarding the Effectiveness Review which had been incorporated in the draft review report and highlighted in blue font.

7.5 Members considered the draft responses and agreed the responses were representative of the Committee's assessment of effectiveness. On a proposal by Ms U O'Hare, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Effectiveness Review was approved and recommended to the Board subject to the following amendments: -

- 2 second paragraph remove reference to "meaningful outcomes"
- 4 add in "informal dialogue as required"

- 10 remove “financial processes” and add that cyber security training for Board Members will be provided.
- 18 amend “can be” to “is proving”

8 LONE WORKING POLICY (Scheduled Review) BSC.05.01.26

8.1 Miss L Wilson advised that the reviewed Lone Working Policy had previously been considered by the Committee at the November 2025 meeting, the Committee had requested that the Policy be referred to ARAC so that they might provide an opinion in relation to the elements of risk addressed by the Policy.

8.2 The Director of Business Support reported that ARAC considered the Policy at their January 2026 meeting, and their comments and recommendations had been incorporated in the cover page of the policy document.

8.3 Members noted the importance of having assurance from ARAC that the health and safety aspect of the Lone Working Policy were being addressed.

8.4 Ms U O’Hare referred to paragraph 1 of the Policy and commented that it was important to tie in when Libraries NI considers it safe to lone work with health and safety. While the policy couldn’t be prescriptive for all circumstances, it was important to strongly message that Libraries NI’s priority was the health and safety of staff, and this should be explicitly referenced in the Policy.

8.5 The Chief Executive reported that ARAC had discussed the multi-layered approach to lone working, the health and safety risk assessment process and that each Lone Working situation was considered individually in consultation with staff members.

8.6 The Assets Manager advised that local managers and district managers were key in carrying out risk assessments, they knew the library and had local knowledge.

8.7 Ms B Anley enquired how Libraries NI would manage a situation where a staff member disagreed with the Branch Library Manager on the outcome of a risk assessment.

8.8 The Head of Human Resources advised that the employee may raise this with HR directly or through their Trade Union, HR would work through their concerns and liaise with Assets if necessary.

8.9 The Director of Business Support confirmed that the Lone Working Policy has been reviewed, and revisions agreed with Trade Unions through the platform of the formal Libraries NI Negotiating Committee.

8.10 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the reviewed Lone Working Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption subject to the following amendments: -

- at 1.3 replace "think and deal with" with "comply"
- at 1.6 in third sentence after carried out add "in line with the Health and Safety Policy"

9 INFORMATION SYSTEMS REPORT JANUARY 2026 BSC.06.01.26

9.1 The Head of ICU/ICT presented the Information Systems Report for November 2025 to January 2026 updating Members regarding the Information Systems Programme, the e3 project, e3 contract service level performance and Information Security. All service levels had been met during the reporting period; there were no cyber security incidents to report.

9.2 Members enquired as to how the senior team managed the evolving cyber security environment and threats from developments in AI and if there was a formal system for communicating this.

9.3 The Head of ICU/ICT advised that cyber security was included within the service management regime with both the e3 service provider (Fujitsu) and PSSN service provider (BT) and they provide a monthly security report. DfC also provide security information. Systems and policies around security were robust, but it was recognised there was an ongoing need to increase intelligence around AI.

9.4 Miss L Wilson enquired if the table in the Report could be simplified.

9.5 The Head of ICU/ICT advised that he would provide a more succinct version in future reports.

9.6 Members noted the Report.

At 12:08 pm the Assets Manager left the meeting.

10 POST PROJECT EVALUATION (PPE) LESSONS LEARNED REPORT 2024/25 BSC.07.01.26

10.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Report informing the Committee of business cases approved and lessons learned from post project evaluations carried out between April 2024 and March 2025. The Report contributed to an ongoing improvement programme intended to share examples of good practice and highlight areas for improvement in the business case development and project delivery process.

10.2 Ms B Anley enquired regarding the impact of delays in capital investment projects being approved and funded.

10.3 The Director of Business Support advised that larger scale capital investment projects, being funded on a project by project basis, were submitted individually reflecting the Asset Management priorities.

10.4 The Chief Executive advised that it was important to have a pipeline of business cases ready should funding become available.

10.5 Miss L Wilson enquired who carried out the review and was the stock budget appraised?

10.6 The Director of Business Support confirmed that he had carried out the review, business cases over £1,000 were scrutinised by him before going to SMT. On advice from DfC a business case was no longer required for stock, as this was considered a fundamental part of providing a library service.

10.7 Members noted the Report.

11 FINANCE REPORTS

11.1 **RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO 31 DECEMBER 2025** **BSC.08.01.26**

11.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure Report detailing results for the nine months to 31 December 2025.

11.3 Miss L Wilson enquired if there were any vulnerable areas subject to volatility.

11.4 The Finance Manager advised that utilities, personal injury claims and property maintenance were subject to fluctuations.

11.5 Members noted the Report.

Ms U O'Hare left the meeting at 12:38 pm and returned at 12:39 pm

11.6 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE **BSC.09.01.26**

11.7 The Finance Manager presented the Report detailing capital spend for the nine months to 31 December 2025.

11.8 Ms B Anley enquired if the temporary relocation of Enniskillen Library would be a resource or capital cost and were Libraries NI confident of the capital funding for this project.

11.9 The Finance Manager advised that the relocation cost for a short-term rental would be a resource expenditure.

11.10 The Director of Business Support advised that 2026/27 capital funding for Enniskillen had not yet been confirmed, but that DfC had classified it as an inescapable project in their capital budgeting matrix.

11.11 Councillor M McRandal noted that £82,000 had been allocated to Carnlough Library Lease.

11.12 The Finance Manager advised that this due an accounting treatment which considered the whole period of the lease, 10 years. Rent was effectively £8,200 pa.

11.13 Members noted the Report.

12 PROCUREMENT REPORT - GOODS & SERVICES TENDERS OVER £1,000 & SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000 BSC.10.01.26

12.1 The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report informing the Committee of procurement activity over £1,000 and Single Tender Actions for the period 11 November 2025 – 09 January 2026.

12.2 Miss L Wilson enquired why there was no procurement reported for newspapers?

12.3 The Director of Business Support advised that newspapers were supplied by multiple local suppliers, rather than one supplier; that Libraries NI do aim to centralise purchases with Marketing buying all branded items.

12.4 The Finance Manager advised that newspapers did go out for a quote and she would provide the Committee with more information.

12.5 Councillor J Gilmour enquired regarding the 10 year lease for Draperstown Library being from 2023.

12.6 The Director of Business Support reported that the renewed lease commencement date reflected the previous lease having ended in 2023.

12.7 Members noted the Report.

13 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO DECEMBER 2025 BSC.11.01.26

13.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report to 31 December 2025. The performance target set for the 2025/26 year was to maintain sickness absence (composite average Full Time Equivalent days lost) at or below 11.5 days by 31 March 2026. The current absence rate was 12.50 FTE days.

13.2 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding steps to identify issues around staff welfare and progress on completing staff appraisals.

13.3 The Head of Human Resources reported that 98% of appraisals had been completed by 31 December 2025. The Investors in People Survey had been opened to agency staff and over 70% had responded, overall, 58% of staff had responded, the lowest percentage of responses was among building and cleaning staff. Investors In People would provide an initial overview of findings on 12 February 2026.

13.4 Councillor M McRandal commented that the two-year absence trend had shown little variation and enquired regarding staff morale.

13.5 The Head of Human Resources advised that while there would always be pockets of discontent, in general there was not a feeling that morale was low. The Investors in People Survey would provide further information. The absence data wasn't necessarily a reflection of morale, but was impacted by the staffing profile. The current focus was on how absence was being managed, the Health and Wellbeing Team were attending Branch Library Manager meetings and meetings with senior managers were established to identify, agree and review actions in relation to managing attendance at work.

13.6 Ms B Anley enquired if a total view of the Investors in People Survey feedback would be provided, including both quantitative and qualitive data.

13.7 The Head of Human Resources advised that as much information as possible from the survey would be provided at the next Committee meeting.

13.8 Members noted the Report.

14 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL BSC.12.01.26

14.1 Miss L Wilson presented the Report on the Use of the Common Seal of the Northern Ireland Library Authority detailing the one occasion when the seal had been applied between November 2025 and January 2026.

14.2 Members noted the Report.

15 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

15.1 Ms D Reynolds thanked the Committee for allowing her to observe.

15.2 The Director of Business Support thanked Miss L Wilson for her work as Chairperson over the last two years.

15.3 Members also thanked Miss L Wilson for her guidance and management of committee business during her tenure as Chairperson.

16 DATE OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

16.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 10:30am.

17 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

17.1 The meeting ended at 1:17pm

17.2 All members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and were present throughout, with the following exceptions:

- The Assets Manager left the meeting at 12:08pm
- Ms U O'Hare left the meeting at 12:38pm and returned at 12:39pm.

Signed M McRandal

Dated 26/2/26