

## **LIBRARIES NI**

### **The Northern Ireland Library Authority**

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held in Belfast Central Library  
on Thursday 11 May 2023 at 10:30am

#### **PRESENT**

Professor Bernard Cullen  
Councillor Julie Gilmour  
Councillor Andrew McAuley  
Mr Harry Reid  
Dr Margaret Ward

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
Mr Sean Beattie	Head of Service
Ms Margaret Bell	Head of Service
Ms Kim Aiken	Deputy Head of Service
Ms Julie Reid	Deputy Head of Service
Ms Jennifer Stafford	Area Manager
Ms Christy Niblock	District Manager
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

In the absence of the Chairperson and Vice-chairperson, Professor B Cullen chaired the meeting. He welcomed Members and staff to Belfast Central Library, in particular he welcomed Councillor Andrew McAuley to his first meeting of the Services Committee and Kim Aiken in her new role as Deputy Head of Service. He extended the welcome to Jennifer Stafford, Area Manager, and Christy Niblock, District Manager, who were attending the meeting as observers.

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

1.1 An apology was received from Ms Deirdre Kenny, Councillor C Mallaghan, Mr J Peto and Ms S Millar.

#### **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

2.1 The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation 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 conflicts of interest were declared.

### **3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS**

3.1 The Chairperson acknowledged this meeting as the last meeting for a number of Members and thanked the following for their contribution to the Services Committee:

- Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
- Councillor Donal Lyons
- Ms Deirdre Kenny
- Mr Harry Reid
- Dr Margaret Ward.

### **4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS**

**SC.01.05.23**

4.1 The Director of Library Services referred to the report that had been circulated and drew attention to a number of items. She highlighted the pilot to provide enhanced support to students preparing for exams, offering additional opening hours and an increase in the study space available noting that due to financial constraints the pilot is restricted to two libraries and is currently operating in Bangor Carnegie and Glengormley libraries.

4.2 She also highlighted that during the summer, the triangle libraries of Portrush, Portstewart and Coleraine will be promoted widely and a programme of services offered by all three libraries to encourage families who are in the area all summer to use the facilities. Marketing will promote the opening hours and programme of activities across the area including caravan sites and in tourist destinations. Libraries will host free family activities such as Rhythm and Rhyme, Storytime, Craft sessions, Lego Clubs and Film screenings throughout the summer. In addition there will be other activities to support the Big Summer Read.

4.3 The Director of Library Services informed Members that the summer opening hours schedule will be extended by three weeks. Summer opening hours 2023 will operate from Monday 19 June to Saturday 16 September inclusive.

4.4 Ms A Adair reported that Ormeau Road Library was accredited as Northern Ireland's first Library of Sanctuary in March 2023 and will be officially launched during Good Relations Week in September. This award recognises the library as a safe and welcoming space for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other newcomers and endorses the work Libraries NI is doing to welcome everyone. The three principles required to qualify for sanctuary status were Learn, Share, and Embed.

4.5 The Director of Library Services referred to a recent request from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Strategic Community Planning as they sought to identify programmes and services delivered by partners which tackled and mitigated against child poverty within the borough. She gave an overview of the activities

that Libraries NI delivers which are relevant across the entire service.

- 4.6 The Director of Library Services then referred to the Creative Holywood Festival that offered an exciting programme of art events and creative activities throughout March and April 2023. She reported that as part of the festival, the newly launched Con Auld Gallery at Holywood Library hosted artist and Festival Artist in Residence, Ed Reynolds' exhibition entitled 'About Holywood'.
- 4.7 Ms A Adair reported on working in partnership with the Ulster Scots Agency and the Ulster Scots Community Network with a series of 21 workshops delivered in 16 libraries from February to April. Workshops were based around the Ulster Scots language, creative writing, genealogy and music and customer feedback has been very positive.
- 4.8 The Director of Library Services confirmed that the Good Friday Agreement would be displayed in the following libraries:
- Omagh Library on 15 May 2023
  - Belfast Central Library on 16 May 2023
  - Derry Central Library on 30 May 2023.
- 4.9 The Director of Library Services then provided an update on the Omagh Creative Space bursary. It was noted that Clive McFarland, local author and illustrator, had taken up the residency in Omagh Library and is very pleased to have use of the space.
- 4.10 Ms A Adair drew attention to the Castlereagh: Life and Legacy Exhibition hosted in Newtownards Library from 19 April until 2 May 2023 as part of the ongoing celebrations of the life and legacy of Viscount Castlereagh to mark the 200th anniversary of his death. Robert Stewart, 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, usually known as Lord Castlereagh (18 June 1769 - 12 August 1822) was an Anglo-Irish politician and statesman. Many rare books on the international diplomat, politician and statesman along with bespoke information stands detailing the life of Castlereagh formed part of the exhibition. She reported that the initiative was developed in association with the North Down Museum, Ards and North Down Borough Council Arts and Heritage Department and the Chairman of the Council's Viscount Castlereagh Working Group, Alderman Stephen McIlveen.
- 4.11 The Director of Library Services highlighted the following forthcoming events:
- Empathy Day, 8 June 2023
  - Summer Reading Challenge 2023
  - Book Week NI, 16 – 22 October 2023
- Ms A Adair also highlighted that the first of a number of creative writing workshops delivered by Fighting Words will now take place in Cregagh Library on Empathy Day instead of Chichester Library as noted in the circulated report.
- 4.12 The Director of Library Services reported that three members of Libraries NI's staff were successful in receiving a bursary to attend the Library Association of

Ireland (LAI) and Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Ireland Joint Conference in Dundalk on 26 and 27 April 2023. She also referred to the forthcoming International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) World Library and Information Congress 2023 that will take place in Rotterdam from 21 - 25 August 2023. It was noted that the current financial climate will impact on staff attendance at conferences.

- 4.13 The Director of Library Services then drew attention to a number of ongoing initiatives contributing to greening of libraries such as planting and reduced grass cutting to support early pollinators, birds and biodiversity.
- 4.14 Ms A Adair also thanked the Members of the Services Committee whose term was coming to an end for their valuable contribution and support.
- 4.15 Services Committee Members paid tribute to the volume of achievements and valuable work ongoing within the current challenging financial environment.

## **5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2023 SC.02.05.23**

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Dr M Ward, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 16 March 2023 were approved as a correct record of the meeting. It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting held on 27 April 2023.

## **6. MATTERS ARISING**

- 6.1 The Director of Library Services confirmed that Committee Members had been offered the opportunity to participate in a future discussion to review communication to library users.

## **7. DRAFT SERVICE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER 2023/24 SC.03.05.23**

- 7.1 Mr S Beattie, Head of Service, introduced the draft Service Plan for 2023/24 highlighting that the targets may be subject to revision in the context of the final budget allocation and other minor refinements. He drew attention to a number of objectives such as:
- implement the Collections Development Policy
  - develop and implement a Customer Experience Strategy
  - continue to contribute to the delivery of Community Planning
  - investigate using new social media channels and develop a plan to establish Libraries NI presence
  - delivery of the Reading and Reader Development Strategy action plan
  - review Libraries NI's approach to Community Information.

- 7.2 The Head of Service went on to explain how these contribute to the achievement of targets for loans, renewals, loans, active members, new members and enhancing the customer experience.
- 7.3 On a proposal by Professor B Cullen, seconded by Councillor A McAuley, the Services Committee approved the Draft Service Plan 2023/24.
- 7.4 The Head of Service then presented the risk register which details the risks identified in relation to the service plan and reported that three risks were categorised as high, three as medium and two as low:
- high: staff, resources, planning
  - medium: participation and relevance, customer expectations, information security
  - low: corporate governance, business continuity.
- 7.5 He also highlighted that COVID-19 has been removed as a standalone risk and included within the Business Continuity risk as a return to more normal service is progressing.
- 7.6 On a proposal by Professor B Cullen, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Services Committee approved the Risk Register 2023/24.

## **8. LIBRARY SERVICES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES SC.04.05.23**

- 8.1 Ms M Bell, Head of Service, referred to the report that had been circulated and gave a presentation on library services to rural communities. She drew attention to Libraries NI's corporate goal 'to provide a shared inclusive public library service which supports communities and societal wellbeing' and confirmed that Libraries NI has due regard to rural needs when designing and delivering services to rural dwellers and this in turn complies with the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.
- 8.2 The Head of Service reported that based on the DAERA definition of rural, there are 29 libraries in the network designated as rural i.e. located in settlements of fewer than 5,000 residents and she gave a flavour of the variety of the size, age and condition of these libraries.
- 8.3 Ms M Bell gave an overview of Libraries NI's partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) through a Memorandum of Understanding and outlined specific projects delivered jointly with funding support from DAERA such as:
- Out of Hours libraries
  - Library in a Box
  - Rural Health in Mind staffing and programming
  - Lego Clubs
  - SAD Lamps.

- 8.4 The Head of Service then reported on the Connect Project, a pilot led by the Digital Assist Group and delivered in partnership with Libraries NI, which enabled the purchase, distribution and use of Lenovo devices with pre-paid internet access and tailored training. Of the 65 devices distributed, 64% were in rural areas and 96% felt the project was worthwhile. The Digital Citizen Project targeted rural areas and delivered computer training in libraries, community centres and sports clubs in rural communities.
- 8.5 Ms M Bell went on to explain the core activities offer that addresses language, literacy and social skills, social isolation and digital choices across the network and provided participation statistics for the 29 rural libraries. She also referred to the virtual service offer which includes eProgramming including Heritage from Home, eBooks, eMagazines, eNewspapers in a range of languages and Reachdeck translation software. Ms M Bell then reported on the individual rural libraries that have meeting rooms, gallery and creative spaces and highlighted a number of events and activities that took place specifically in rural libraries during 2022/23.
- 8.6 The Head of Service confirmed that 14 mobile library vehicles service rural villages and primary schools including a service to Rathlin Island and that nine vehicles deliver a homecall service in rural areas. She also referred to the Cross Border Mobile service delivered as part of a Memorandum of Understanding with Donegal County Council providing a service to rural areas on both sides of the River Foyle.
- 8.7 Members noted the report on library services to rural communities and thanked Ms M Bell for the presentation.

## **9. THE EDGE CONFERENCE**

**SC.05.05.23**

- 9.1 Mr S Beattie, Head of Service, introduced the report on the EDGE Conference that took place on 2 and 3 March 2023 in Edinburgh. He reported that the conference is one of the leading library conferences in the UK and Ireland and is organised by Edinburgh City Council.
- 9.2 The Head of Service gave an overview of the conference programme and format. He reported that on the first day the topics focused on how libraries can play a positive role in delivering change within societies and communities especially in the areas of climate change and health and on the second day the emphasis was on reader development. Each topic was Chaired and the speakers were introduced by a leading figure within the library profession: Joan Parr, Service Director Culture and Wellbeing, Edinburgh City Council, Mark Freeman, past President, Libraries Connected and Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP Scotland. At the end of each session there was an open question and answer opportunity with the presenters.

- 9.3 The Head of Service reported that seven members of Libraries NI's staff attended the conference and that it successfully contributed to their professional development as it provided an opportunity to network with colleagues across the profession and enhance their awareness of trends within the library community and in particular public libraries.
- 9.4 Mr S Beattie informed the Committee that the staff will incorporate learning from the conference in their work going forward and that management will seek opportunities for Libraries NI to present at similar conferences in the future.
- 9.5 Members noted the EDGE Conference report and thanked Mr S Beattie for the report.

**10. SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2022/23 SC.06.05.23**

- 10.1 Ms J Reid, Deputy Head of Service, presented the Service Plan Progress Report 2022/23 which demonstrates progress on achieving targets as at 31 March 2023. She reported that the majority of targets were achieved and drew attention to the partnership initiative with the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies (MCMS) which was not achieved due to budget constraints. Ms J Reid gave an overview of other partnership work that was completed with MCMS throughout 2022/23.
- 10.2 The Deputy Head of Service drew attention to the book stock fund at £500,000 at the start of the year as the most challenging starting point for many years. She reported that although additional in-year funding brought the stock spend to £1.20 per capita, it was still below the Public Library Standard for stock spend of £2.25.
- 10.3 Ms J Reid went on to highlight a number of significant achievements such as:
- Big Summer Read
  - Book Week NI
  - Heritage at Home
  - Literature Month
  - Give It A Go Month
  - Library of Sanctuary status at Ormeau Road Library
  - Customer Survey.
- 10.4 The Deputy Head of Service also referred to significant work carried out to identify and address barriers to library access, implement new models of service delivery and membership and to promote Libraries NI across the library and information sector at conferences including the International Federation of Library Associations World Congress in Dublin in July 2022.
- 10.5 Services Committee paid tribute to the quality and range of work carried out during 2022/23 and noted the Service Plan Progress Report.

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 11.1 The Chairperson reminded Members that a tour of Belfast Central Library would be available immediately after the meeting.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 12.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would take place on Thursday 21 September 2023 at 10:30am and was due to be held in Derry Central Library.

**13. TOUR OF BELFAST CENTRAL LIBRARY**

- 13.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on the position of the Belfast Central Library Project prior to the tour of the library.

**14. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

- 14.1 The meeting ended at 12:28pm and was followed by a tour of Belfast Central Library.
- 14.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.