

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 8 February 2024 at 10:30 am

PRESENT

(IP) Ms Bonnie Anley	Chairperson
(IP) Councillor Julie Gilmour	Vice Chairperson
(VL) Councillor Alistair Cathcart	
(IP) Councillor Peter Johnston	
(VL) Councillor Andrew McAuley	
(IP) Councillor Martin McRandal	
(IP) Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	
(IP) Mr John Peto	
(IP) Miss Linda Wilson	

IN ATTENDANCE

(IP) Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
(IP) Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
(IP) Mr Desi Miskelly	Director of Business Support
(IP) Mr Desi Curry	Head of ICU and ICT
(IP) Mr Mark Waterworth	Senior IT Support Officer
(VL) Mr Michael Lynn	Service Development Manager
(VL) Ms Maria Diamond	Senior Manager, Heritage
(IP) Ms Finola Guinnane	Boardroom Apprentice

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

None

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 conflicts of interest were declared from Members.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 Ms B Anley provided Members with a synopsis of her background and stated that she was honoured to be appointed to the role of Chairperson of the Libraries NI Board. She spoke about the importance of libraries and paid tribute to the out-going Chairperson Professor B Cullen. Ms Anley added that she hoped to meet with each Member individually either in person or remotely before the next meeting of the Board in April.
- 3.2 The Chairperson welcomed Mr D Curry, Head of ICU and ICT and Mr M Waterworth, Senior IT Support Officer to the meeting who were in attendance for Agenda Item 15: Update on Information Security: Presentation.
- 3.3 The Chairperson reminded Members that as part of the Leadership Development Plan it had been agreed that some staff should attend Board and Committee meetings as part of their personal development and in that capacity welcomed the following staff:
- Mr M Lynn, Service Development Manager
 - Ms M Diamond, Senior Manager, Heritage

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:
- Department for Communities – new Culture Director
 - Independent review of English Public Libraries
 - Revised Resource Allocation 2023/24
 - Revised Capital Allocation 2023/24
 - Follow-up to Meeting with Deputy Secretary – Libraries NI Funding and Related Matters
 - Department for Communities (DfC) / Arms Length Bodies (ALB) Senior Leaders Forum, 24 January 2024
 - Libraries NI Board
 - UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry: Module 6 Launch
 - Investing in a Better Future: The Independent Review of Education in Northern Ireland
 - Sharing of Personal Data – Libraries NI / Santander Bank
- 4.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Department for Communities (DfC) had allocated £1.2 million for bookstock. This allocation is to be fully spent by the end of the financial year. In response to a question from Councillor A Cathcart regarding the limited timeframe in which to spend the additional allocation, the Chief Executive explained that the Stock Team have contingency plans in place in the event funds become available in-year and are able to proceed quickly to purchase new stock. Members were reminded that although the additional allocation was welcome the stock budget for the 2023/24 financial year (approximately £1.5 million) was 50% lower than in previous years.

- 4.3 The Chairperson referred to the letter received from DfC on 22 December 2023 regarding the size of the Libraries NI Board and the appointment of additional Board Members. She noted that two Committee meetings had to be cancelled due to being inquorate and asked Members to assist in ensuring that all Committees are quorate while the recruitment process takes place. The Chief Executive agreed to issue an e-mail to Members asking for Members to nominate to join other Committees.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2023
LNI 01.02.24

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 14 December 2023 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2023
LNI 02.02.24

- 6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting that an update would be provided on all matters arising except for those which were on the Agenda for further discussion.

Item 3.2: Chairperson's Business

- 6.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that the out-going Chairperson, Professor B Cullen had written to the Deputy Secretary, DfC on 21 December 2023 as a follow-up to the meeting held on 20 November 2023. To date no response has been received. He reported that a meeting was scheduled with Mr I Greenway, the new Culture Director, DfC on 9 February 2024 at which he would raise the issues of sustainable funding for the library service and an updated public library strategy.

Item 9.4: Board Effectiveness Review 2023/24

- 6.3 It was noted that this matter would be discussed at Agenda Item 9: Board Effectiveness Review 2023/24.

7. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION 2024/25: UPDATE

- 7.1 The Chief Executive briefed the Board that to date no information with regard to a financial allocation for 2024/25 had been received. He added that at his forthcoming meeting with Mr I Greenway, Culture Director, DfC this matter would be raised. He reported that he would continue to make the case for sustainable funding for libraries to the Department and hoped that more information would be available for the April meeting of the Board.

- 7.2 Councillor P Johnston stated that as the newly appointed DfC Minister was now in place, it was an opportune time to plead the case for libraries. He added that key risks should be identified and that the impact of another year of drastic

budget cuts involving more strenuous actions to be taken would be detrimental to the service. Councillor Johnston suggested that a strongly worded letter be sent from Board Members to the DfC Minister. The Chief Executive agreed with the points made by Councillor Johnston adding that a reasonable level of funding for the service needs to be provided in order for Libraries NI to recover from the budget cuts in previous years.

8. DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25: UPDATE LNI 03.02.24

8.1 The Chief Executive reported that a tentative start has been made on drafting the Annual Business Plan 2024/25, including targets for 2024/25. The Annual Business Plan 2024/25 will take cognisance of the Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024, planning frameworks, including the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and the Outcomes Delivery Plan, and the DfC Strategy 2020-25: Building Inclusive Communities. He reminded Members that work on a new Strategic Programme for Government had taken place during 2021/22 but had not been completed and is unlikely to be in place, or published, by the time the Annual Business Plan for 2024/25 is finalised. In addition, Libraries NI continues to work to an outdated Public Library Strategy and Standards.

8.2 He noted that the financial allocation will be a fundamental determinant in establishing the focus of the plan and the setting of specific targets, actions and objectives particularly those relating to participation and activities.

8.3 He reported that the draft Business Plan targets for 2024/25 would be shared with the Department and may be revised and updated, as appropriate, to take account of Departmental priorities. Although notification of a funding allocation for 2024/25 has not yet been received, it is important that there is some structure to which staff can work with effect from 1 April 2024 to allow Service and other subsidiary Plans to be developed. It is hoped that a draft of the Annual Business Plan 2024/25 will be available for the April Board meeting.

8.4 He informed Members that work will also take place during 2024/25 to refresh, renew and update the Libraries NI Corporate Plan and to set strategic direction and priorities for the next five years. Progress and updates on this work will be provided separately to the Board.

8.5 Members noted the report.

9. BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2023/24 LNI 04.02.24

9.1 The Chief Executive informed Members that individual Committees had reviewed their effectiveness, including the continued relevance of the Schemes of Delegation. The review papers were appended to the minutes of the meetings at which the review was undertaken. It was noted the Services Committee Review of Effectiveness will be formally approved at the March Services Committee meeting.

- 9.2 It was also noted that at its meeting on 17 January 2024, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had completed an effectiveness review using the new effectiveness questionnaire produced by the National Audit Office (NAO). This new evaluation contains 80 'Essential' questions and 99 'Good Practice' questions compared to the previous checklist which contained a total of 34 questions. In line with the NAO's recommended approach, all 'Essential' questions were considered and in addition, the 'Good Practice' questions in Part 1 and Part 5 were also considered.
- 9.3 Following review it was concluded that the Committee was meeting the required standard in all areas. No changes to the Scheme of Delegation are required as there were no proposed changes to the Committee's operating arrangements.
- 9.4 Members considered the Effectiveness Review and draft Action Plan and following discussion it was agreed that the response to Question 18 'Are the Committees operating effectively?' should be changed from 'Yes' to 'Partly' and additional wording inserted to reflect a quoracy issue which resulted in two Committee meetings being cancelled due to members being unable to attend.
- 9.5 The Chief Executive then drew attention to the Proposed Draft Action Plan. The following amendments were suggested:
- Committee Effectiveness - the wording 'at the earliest opportunity' to be added
 - Meeting Venues – amend to reflect that two Board Meetings per year to be held in a location other than Lisburn
 - The Scheme of Delegation for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to be included as an Appendix to the Board Operating Framework and published on the Libraries NI website
- 9.6 The Chairperson suggested Members should attend the Board Meetings in person and put it that a Board can operate more effectively when attendees are physically present. She encouraged Members to attend in person where possible.
- 9.7 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Miss L Wilson, Members confirmed that they were content that all reviews had been completed, agreed the draft Action Plan to include the amendments as shown at paragraphs 9.4 and 9.5 above and concluded the review of effectiveness by confirming it is content that the Board and its Committees were operating effectively.

10. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 05.02.24

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

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2023/24: Quarter 3: October – December 2023

LNI 05.02.24 (i)

- 10.2 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Report for Quarter 3: October to December 2023. He explained that at the end of Quarter 3 good progress continued to be made in respect of the achievement against targets across a wide range of areas. In reporting performance, he reminded Members that KPIs had been moderated to take account of the in-year financial situation and this needed to be borne in mind. He then discussed the two areas where targets had not been achieved i.e. sickness absence and prompt payment of invoices providing an update of actions being taken to improve performance.

Finance Report: December 2023

LNI 05.02.24 (ii)

- 10.3 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to December 2023 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 25 January 2024.
- 10.4 He drew attention to the Capital Report noting that a potential underspend of £68,000 (0.9%) was projected as at December 2023 and that staff were working to reduce this figure further. He reported that all projects were on site and progressing.

- 10.5 He then drew attention to the Resource Report noting that this report did not include the additional funding recently received for bookstock. He reported that a potential underspend had been forecast and that work was progressing to reduce this to under £100,000 and within the permitted 1% variance limit.

Corporate Risk Register

LNI 05.02.24 (iii)

- 10.6 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 17 January 2024 noting that there had been very little change since last seen by Members as the business and operating environment had remained largely unchanged. He reported that the Risk Register had been prepared before the additional funding had been released for book stock in late December 2023.
- 10.7 The Chairperson asked that Risk 4: Corporate Governance be kept under review. The Director of Business Support confirmed that the next review of the Corporate Risk Register would take place in early March 2024.
- 10.8 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at January 2024.
- 10.9 The Director of Business Support informed Members that it had been proposed to amend the Risk Management Framework as the current model did not allow for a high impact risk to be managed to 'green'. He added that while this had not impacted on the Corporate Risk Register it did have implications for health and safety risk assessments which used the same evaluation model. Changes were also proposed to the risk impact descriptors. He confirmed that these proposed changes had been discussed at the

meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 17 January 2024 and Committee Members had been content to recommend the changes to the Board for approval.

- 10.10 On a proposal by Ms W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the changes to the Risk Management Framework and risk impact descriptors as outlined at paragraph 10.8 above.

11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2024 LNI 06.02.24

- 11.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024.

- 11.2 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 17 January 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

- 11.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Amendment to the Internal Audit Annual Plan
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Effectiveness Review

12. UPDATE ON THE MEETING OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE SCHEDULED FOR 18 JANUARY 2024 – CANCELLED LNI 07.02.24

- 12.1 Mr J Peto, Chairperson of the Committee, reported that the meeting of the Services Committee scheduled for 18 January 2024, had been cancelled due to the meeting being inquorate. In order to progress the Committee's Effectiveness Review the questionnaire was circulated to Members for their consideration. No significant matters were identified.

- 12.2 Members noted that the completed checklist for the Services Committee Effectiveness Review and the Draft Scheme of Delegation would be approved at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 21 March 2024.

- 12.3 Members noted the Services Committee Effectiveness Review.

13. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEES HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2024 LNI 08.02.24

- 13.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Miss L Wilson, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2024.

- 13.2 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 25 January 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 13.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor P Johnston, the Board approved and adopted the Committee Board Effectiveness Review 2023/24.
- 13.4 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the Engagement of Agency Workers Policy Review.
- 13.5 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Information Technology/Security Related Policies – Review
 - Information Technology Security Policy
 - Server Security Policy
 - Network Security Policy
 - Microsoft Windows Client Security Policy
 - Application Security Policy
 - Internet Security Policy
 - Staff Acceptable Use Policy
 - Library Computers Conditions of Use Policy

**14. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT
2023/24 LNI 09.02.24**

- 14.1 Councillor J Gilmour, Vice-Chairperson of the Board presented the Remuneration Committee Effectiveness Review which had been carried out at the meeting of the Committee held on 14 December 2023.
- 14.2 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved and adopted the Remuneration Committee Effectiveness Review Report 2023/24.

15. UPDATE ON INFORMATION SECURITY: PRESENTATION

- 15.1 Mr D Curry, Head of ICU and ICT and Mr M Waterworth, Senior IT Support Officer gave a presentation to the Board on Information Management and Data Security.
- 15.2 Mr D Curry explained to Members the importance of the security of information and the responsibility of staff and Board Members to keep information safe. He referred to the various IT policies which were in place noting that they are available for Members to view on the Libraries NI website. He added that this presentation was timely as new Members had been appointed to the Board

and going forward IT security would form part of Board Members induction and will be delivered in more detail.

- 15.3 Mr M Waterworth updated Members on steps being taken to protect information being transmitted to and from Board Members. He explained that all Board Members have access to a Microsoft Office package as part of their Libraries NI Account. From the beginning of March all official electronic correspondence will be issued to Libraries NI e-mail addresses only, which Board Members can access by logging onto their Libraries NI account. A two factor authentication process will also commence in early March to further ensure electronic information is protected. Instructions will be issued to Board Members in advance of these new processes commencing.
- 15.4 Members thanked Mr Curry and Mr Waterworth for a very interesting and informative presentation.

16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

- 16.1 The Chairperson informed Members that due to a prior diary engagement she would be unable to attend the Board Meeting scheduled for 4 July 2024 and suggested that this meeting be rescheduled to 27 June 2024. Members were asked to check their availability and confirm if this new date would be suitable.
- 16.2 There was no other notified business.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

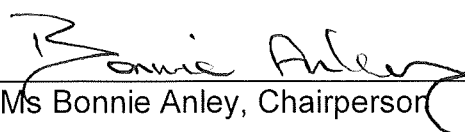
- 17.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 25 April 2024 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library.

18. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 18.1 The meeting ended at 13:13 pm.
- 18.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Councillor A McAuley joined the meeting at 12:27 pm

Miss L Wilson left the meeting at 12:42 pm

Signed: 
Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date: 25 April 2024