

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Lisburn City Library and remotely via video link (Zoom) on Thursday 17 October 2024 at 10:30 am

PRESENT

Ms Bonnie Anley (IP)	Chairperson
Councillor Julie Gilmour (IP)	Vice-Chairperson
Councillor Alistair Cathcart (VL)	
Mr Adrian Driscoll (IP)	
Councillor Rosie Kinnear (IP)	
Councillor Roisin Lynch (IP)	
Councillor Martin McRandal (IP)	
Ms Ursula O'Hare (IP)	
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE (VL)	
Mr John Peto (IP)	
Councillor Gareth Sharvin (IP)	
Miss Linda Wilson (IP)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Jim O'Hagan (IP)	Chief Executive
Mr Desi Miskelly (IP)	Director of Business Support
Ms Adrienne Adair (IP)	Director of Library Services

No observer from the Department for Communities (DfC) attended the Board Meeting.

Note: IP denotes 'in-person' attendance, VL denotes 'virtual' attendance.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

- 1.1 Councillor Andrew McAuley

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 reported that she had received a letter from the Department for Communities (DfC) dated 17 September 2024 giving formal approval of the Libraries NI Business Plan 2024/25.

- 3.2 She informed the Board that Induction Training for the new Board Members had taken place on 25 September 2024 and had been attended by Mr A Driscoll, Councillor R Kinnear, Ms U O'Hare and Councillor G Sharvin. Councillor R Lynch had been unable to attend and a further induction training session would be arranged for Councillor Lynch.
- 3.3 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Board approved the appointment of the new Board Members to the following Committees:
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee – Councillor G Sharvin
Business Support Committee – Ms U O'Hare and Councillor R Lynch
Services Committee – Councillor R Kinnear and Mr A Driscoll
- 3.4 The Chairperson informed Members that it was hoped to appoint one further Board Member to each Committee and asked Members to give consideration to this. She added that the Chief Executive would follow-up on this matter with a view to bringing nominations to the next meeting of the Board to be held on 12 December 2024.
- 3.5 The Chairperson thanked those Board Members who had attended the official Re-opening of Ballymoney Library on 2 October 2024 and the official Launch of Book Week NI on 4 October 2024.

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:
- Annual Business Plan 2024-25
 - Response to DfC Budget 2024/25 Equality Impact Assessment
 - Partnership Agreement between Department for Communities and Libraries NI
 - Book Week NI 2024: (21 – 27 October 2024)
 - Official Re-opening of Ballymoney Library, 2 October 2024
 - Remembering and Celebrating the Life of Mr N Bodger, former Board Member
 - Head of Service South and East Region
 - Industrial Dispute
 - Covid Enquiry Module 9 and 10
 - Boardroom Apprentice
 - Assembly Questions
- 4.2 The Chief Executive informed Members that Book Week would take place this year from 21 – 27 October 2024. He explained that this would be the ninth year that this event had been held and that it is a joint initiative between Libraries NI and BBC Northern Ireland. He added that a number of Book Week Ambassadors drawn from across public life would support and raise the profile of the initiative. He referred to 'Love your Library Day' on 23 October explaining that this is part of the Book Week celebrations and he

encouraged as many Members as possible to take part in this and other events taking place during this week.

- 4.3 The Chief Executive reported that the post of Head of Service for the South and East region was now vacant following the resignation of the postholder on 31 July 2024. In order to move the recruitment process forward Board approval is required. On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board gave approval for officers to proceed with the process to fill the vacant post of Head of Service, South and East region .
- 4.4 It was noted the industrial dispute by Branch Library Managers had reached a resolution following a conciliation process facilitated by the Labour Relations Agency. The Chairperson thanked all those involved in bringing this matter to a positive conclusion.
- 4.5 In response to a question from Councillor G Sharvin, the Chief Executive agreed to write to Ms E Mullan expressing the Board's disappointment that the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme for 2025 would not be commissioned and to encourage her to continue to engage with The Executive Office to explore options for the future of the programme.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 27 JUNE 2024
LNI 01.10.24

- 5.1 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mr J Peto, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 27 June 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD HELD ON 27 JUNE 2024
LNI 02.10.24

- 6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting the following.

Item 10.4: Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24

- 6.2 Members noted that this item had been completed and that the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 had been submitted to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for audit on 16 August 2024.

Item 13.2: Revised Draft Annual Business Plan 2024/25

- 6.3 Members noted that this item had been completed and the draft Annual Business Plan 2024/25 had been submitted to the Department for approval on 8 July 2024 and as previously reported approval had been received on 17 September 2024.

Item 14.4: Corporate Plan 2025 – 30: Progress Update (Presentation)

- 6.4 It was noted that this item was completed and a draft of the Corporate Plan 2025 – 30 together with questions for consideration had been issued to Members on 5 September 2024 in advance of the Board Planning Day which was held on 12 September 2024.

**7. MINUTES OF THE BOARD PLANNING MEETING HELD ON
12 SEPTEMBER 2024 LNI 03.10.24**

- 7.1 On a proposal by Mr A Driscoll, seconded by Ms U O'Hare, the minutes of the Board Planning Meeting held on 12 September 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

**8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE BOARD PLANNING MEETING HELD ON
12 SEPTEMBER 2024 LNI 04.10.24**

- 8.1 The Chief Executive reported that there had been only one matter arising at *Item 3.18.: Board Planning Day Event – Concluding Remarks* and confirmed that he had received feedback from Board Members regarding the draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 30 and that he would follow-up with individual Board Members on this matter.
- 8.2 Following discussion it was agreed that the Chief Executive should write to Mr I Greenway / Mr J Ball, DfC and ask if they would be willing to attend the next meeting of the Board to provide an update on the Public Library Policy.

**9. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON
12 JUNE 2024 LNI 05.10.24**

- 9.1 The Chairperson reminded Members that the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 12 June 2024 had been presented by the Committee Chairperson at the Board Meeting held on 27 June 2024. However, as no other Committee member was in attendance to second the adoption of the minutes the Board was unable to formally adopt them and instead had noted their contents with a view that formal adoption would take place at the October Board Meeting.
- 9.2 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 12 June 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

**10. REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE
COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2024**

- 10.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, reminded Members that a meeting of the Committee had taken place on 16 October 2024, the formal minutes of which would be available at the next Board Meeting to be held on 12 December 2024. She reported that prior to the Committee meeting, the annual bi-lateral meeting had been held with representatives from the NIAO and Sumer NI to discuss the conduct of the audit, and confirmed that Members had been assured that the NIAO and Sumer NI had received all the co-operation and access necessary to carry out their audit.

10.2 Mrs W Osborne reported that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had recommended approval of the following items to the Board:

- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2023/24
- Libraries NI Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24
- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April to September 2024)
- Corporate Risk Register September 2024.

10.3 Members noted the report.

11. LIBRARIES NI ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023/24

LNI 06.10.24

11.1 The Chief Executive presented four documents for the consideration of the Board and reported on each in turn.

Draft Report to Those Charged with Governance 2023/24 LNI 06.10.24 (i)

11.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) had completed the audit of the 2023/24 Annual Accounts and had indicated that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) would certify the 2023/24 financial statements with an 'unqualified' audit opinion.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2023/24 LNI 06.10.24 (ii)

11.3 The Chief Executive reported that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is required to report annually to the Board on the External Audit Statement in respect of the Accounts, the state of the organisation's finances and on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management and other governance and control issues within the organisation.

11.4 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, confirmed that Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee were content to provide this assurance based on the work carried out by the Committee during the year. Members also noted the Head of Internal Audit's assurance contained in the report.

11.5 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board adopted the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee's Annual Report 2023/24.

Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 LNI 06.10.24 (iii)

11.6 The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 and confirmed that no significant changes had been made to the document since it was last reviewed by Members.

11.7 The Chairperson on behalf of the Board thanked all staff involved in the preparation and production of the Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24, adding that she felt the document was in a more accessible format than in previous years.

11.8 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor R Lynch,

the Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 for submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification.

- 11.9 On a proposal by Councillor G Sharvin, seconded by Mr J Peto, Members agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Chief Executive as Accounting Officer, in the event that any revisions were subsequently required by the NIAO.

Letter of Representation

LNI 06.10.24 (iv)

- 11.10 The Chief Executive referred to the Letter of Representation and reminded Members that as Accounting Officer he was required to submit a Letter of Representation when the signed Annual Report and Accounts were being sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification.

- 11.11 Members noted the Letter of Representation.

12. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 07.10.24

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

Finance Report: August 2024

LNI 07.10.24 (i)

- 12.2 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to August 2024 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 26 September 2024.

- 12.3 He drew attention to the Capital Report and updated Members on progress of each capital project and confirmed that the e3 Project is on track and on budget. Members noted that capital budget cover has been allocated to facilitate the accounting treatment in relation to the renewal of the lease of Portstewart Library and that an addendum to the Business Case in relation to Enniskillen Library has been submitted to the Department. The Director of Business Support confirmed that at 31 August 2024 the projected year end position indicated a potential underspend of some £354,000, however an easement of £350,000 was expected to be approved by DfC which would subsequently reduce the variance to within permitted limits.

- 12.4 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Recurrent Report noting that a potential underspend of £223,000 or 0.7% of the overall budget was being projected.

Corporate Risk Register

LNI 07.10.24 (ii)

- 12.5 The Director of Business Support drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 16 October 2024. He noted that the risks had remained relatively static or had reduced slightly due to the end of the Branch Library Manager industrial action and that the organisation was operating in a stable and steady financial environment i.e. a full year allocation had been received in reasonable time so that more effective planning could be undertaken. He emphasised that although the Corporate Risk Register

reflected a more stable funding environment and outlook, challenges still existed for the organisation in relation to the quantum of funding allocated.

- 12.6 Members noted that at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee discussion had taken place in relation to Risk 6: Planning, but it had been concluded that this risk should remain at a high level and that it would be reviewed by the Risk Management Group at its next meeting.
- 12.7 Members discussed Risk 2: Customer Expectations and it was agreed that Officers would review the wording of this risk in relation to delivering customer services in line with objectives as set out in the Business Plan 2024/25.
- 12.8 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne confirmed that the Corporate Risk Register had been reviewed at the Committee meeting held on 16 October 2024 and that Members were content to recommend the Corporate Risk Register to the Board for approval.
- 12.9 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at September 2024.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) 2024/25: Quarter One: April to June 2024
LNI 07.10.24 (iii)

- 12.10 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Report for Quarter One: April to June 2024. He drew attention to those targets which were coded 'Amber' providing an update on progress to date.
- 12.11 Members noted the KPI 2024/25 Quarter One Report.

Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April to September 2024) LNI 07.10.24 (iv)

- 12.12 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (Bi-AAS) for the period ended 30 September 2024 noting each section and highlighting areas indicated as 'Working towards Compliance' and explained, where applicable, actions being taken to remedy the situation.
- 12.13 He confirmed that the Bi-AAS had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at the Committee meeting held on 16 October 2024. At that meeting Committee Members had discussed Item 8: Policy Implementation and Development and that he had agreed to amend the Bi-AAS response regarding staff's awareness of Health and Safety policies from 'Working towards Compliance' to 'Yes'. He confirmed that Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval with the above amendment.
- 12.14 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, the Board approved the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 30 September 2024 subject to the amendment at paragraph 12.13 above.

13. STANDING ORDERS (REVIEW) LNI 08.10.24

- 13.1 The Chief Executive reminded Members that Standing Orders were last reviewed by the Board at its meeting held on 8 July 2021. As it is good practice to review key documents on a regular basis Standing Orders was once again being brought to Members for consideration. He confirmed that no changes to the document were proposed since it was last reviewed.
- 13.2 On a proposal by Councillor G Sharvin, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Board approved the Standing Orders, as they stand and as agreed at the Board Meeting held on 8 July 2021 as there are no amendments.

14. SCHEDULE OF BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS: NOVEMBER 2024 TO MARCH 2026 LNI 09.10.24

- 14.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the proposed Schedule of Board and Committee meetings for the period 1 November 2024 to 31 March 2026 and asked Members to note the dates in their diaries.

15. DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2024 – 27 – PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESPONSE LNI 10.10.24

- 15.1 The Chief Executive reported that the Northern Ireland Executive had published a Draft Programme for Government 2024 – 2027, Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most. This document was open to a public consultation with a deadline for response of 4 November 2024. He explained that due to the timing of the public consultation it had not been possible to bring a draft response to this Board Meeting and the next Board Meeting scheduled for 12 December falls after the deadline. He proposed that the Senior Management Team prepare a response on behalf of Libraries NI for approval of the Chairperson and submitted before the 4 November deadline.
- 15.2 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, the Board approved for the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team to prepare a response to the Draft Programme for Government 2024 – 2027 and for that response to be circulated to Board Members for comment before being approved by the Chairperson and submitted in time for the 4 November deadline. The short response time was noted by Members. A copy of the submission will be brought to the next meeting of the Board to be held on 12 December 2024.

16. INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE – e3 PROJECT LNI 11.10.24

- 16.1 The Director of Business Support reminded Members that at the February 2021 Board meeting it had been agreed that a dedicated Information Systems Committee (ISC) be established and granted delegated authority by the Board to manage the procurement and implementation phases of the e3 Project and to authorise decisions on behalf of the Board at relevant points in the project life

cycle. The rationale for the special committee was that as the e3 Project moved into its procurement phase a series of key decision points would be encountered that would require consideration and, in some instances, expedient approval by the Board of Libraries NI. Experience in procuring the previous e2 contract had shown that the timing of scheduled Board and Committee meetings was unlikely to coincide with the key decision points and demanding timeframes of the project. It was noted that the Information Systems Committee had met on six occasions with the last meeting held on 30 June 2022.

- 16.2 He reported that the e3 Contract was successfully procured and commenced on 1 October 2022 and will complete all implementation and technical refresh activities by June 2025. Regular updates on the e3 Project and wider information systems programmes are provided to the Business Support Committee. All further decisions required can be made within the scheduled Committee and Board meeting programme. Consequently it is considered that the purpose for which the Information Systems Committee was established has been satisfied and there is no further need for the Committee going forward and that it would be appropriate to stand down the Committee at this point.
- 16.3 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor G Sharvin the Board approved the recommendation that the Information Systems Committee had served its intended purpose and should now be formally 'stood' down.

**17. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON
19 SEPTEMBER 2024 LNI 12.10.24**

- 17.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Mr J Peto, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024.
- 17.2 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 19 September 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 17.3 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor R Kinnear, the Board approved and adopted the Fees and Charges 2024/25.
- 17.4 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Ms B Anley, the Board approved and adopted the Review of Opening Hours Policy.

**18. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 LNI 13.10.24**

- 18.1 In the absence of the Committee Chairperson, Miss L Wilson and there being no nominated Vice-Chairperson, Councillor J Gilmour, Vice-Chairperson of the Board chaired the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 26 September 2024.

18.2 The Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley thanked Councillor Gilmour for chairing the meeting and presented the minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 26 September 2024.

18.3 On a proposal by Ms Anley, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour the draft minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 26 September 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

18.4 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Discipline Policy Review
- Resource Maintenance and Capital Development Programme 2024/25

19. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

19.1 There was no other notified business.

20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

20.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 12 December 2024 at 10.30 am in Lisburn City Library.

21. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

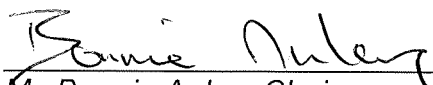
21.1 The meeting ended at 1:32 pm.

21.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Councillor A Cathcart left the meeting at 11.38 am

Mrs W Osborne left at 12:04 pm

Ms U O'Hare left at 1:18 pm

Signed: 
Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date: 12.12.2024