

## **LIBRARIES NI**

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held remotely via Zoom  
on Thursday 21 September 2023 at 10:30am

#### **PRESENT**

Mr John Peto	Vice-Chairperson
Professor Bernard Cullen	
Councillor Julie Gilmour	
Councillor Andrew McAuley	

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Dr 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 Julie Reid	Deputy Head of Service
Ms Karen Maginess	District Manager
Ms Margaret Kane	Heritage Services Manager
Ms Catherine Morrow	Heritage Services Manager
Ms Finola Guinnane	Boardroom Apprentice
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

In the absence of a Chairperson, Adrienne Adair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular she welcomed Ms Finola Guinnane, Boardroom Apprentice, to her first meeting of the Services Committee. She extended the welcome to District Manager, Karen Maginess, and Heritage Services Managers, Ms Margaret Kane and Ms Catherine Morrow who were attending the meeting as observers.

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

1.1 There were no apologies.

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

2.1 The Director of Library Services 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**

#### **Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson SC.01.09.21**

- 3.1 In the absence of a Chairperson, the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, referred to the Standing Orders and reminded Members that if the position of Chairperson becomes vacant, the Vice-Chairperson shall be elected as Chairperson. Therefore, Professor B Cullen proposed Mr J Peto for the position of Chairperson and Councillor J Gilmour seconded the proposal. Mr J Peto was elected as Chairperson of the Services Committee.
- 3.2 Mr J Peto, in his position as Chairperson, sought nominations from Committee Members of a Councillor Member for the position of Vice-Chairperson. Councillor J Gilmour proposed Councillor A McAuley, Professor B Cullen seconded the proposal. There being no further proposals, Councillor A McAuley was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Services Committee.
- 3.3 The Chairperson welcomed Ms Finola Guinnane, Boardroom Apprentice to her first meeting of the Services Committee.

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

**SC.02.09.23**

- 4.1 The Director of Library Services referred to the report that had been circulated. In addition to the written report she provided an update on the summer opening hours and referred to the interim approval to continue with reduced opening hours, on a temporary basis, until the 31 October 2023 when the decision will be reviewed by the Board. Ms A Adair also provided an update on the pilot of extended opening hours to facilitate students undertaking exams which took place from Easter to mid-June in two libraries. She then went on to give an overview of the coastal libraries summer pilot to promote libraries, services and programming in Newcastle, Portrush, Portstewart and Coleraine libraries.
- 4.2 Ms A Adair then drew attention to the breadth of events and activities taking place across libraries this week to celebrate Good Relations Week. This year the mission of Good Relations Week is to deliver a positive message that 'Together' we can make a difference in breaking down barriers and building more inclusive communities.
- 4.3 She also highlighted the successful launch of Library of Sanctuary on 19 September 2023. Ormeau Road Library was accredited as Northern Ireland's first Library of Sanctuary in March 2023 and the status was officially awarded with a programme of events organised for children, adults and stakeholders to celebrate this success featuring multi-cultural storytelling, information stands and the promotion of Libraries NI services and resources. The award recognises the library as a safe and welcoming space for migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other newcomers. Ms A Adair commended Ms B Steele, Service Development Manager and the Customer Groups Team on their work in securing the award and Professor B Cullen thanked Councillor J Gilmour, Vice-Chairperson of the Board, for accepting the award on behalf of Libraries NI.

- 4.4 The Director of Library Services informed Members that Libraries NI will continue to support Macmillan Coffee Morning this year in and around 29 September 2023 and encouraged Members to attend a coffee morning in their local library.
- 4.5 Ms A Adair reported that Libraries NI launched a new three-year charity partnership agreement with Action Mental Health (AMH) in June and gave an overview of the purpose of the partnership and forthcoming planned events by the Official Charity Committee to celebrate the partnership.
- 4.6 The Director of Library Services referred to a visit by members of the Open University (OU) student engagement team to Bangor Carnegie and Lisburn City libraries in May to engage with the high level of students studying in both libraries. The OU staff presented options for studying with the OU as well as highlighting the courses available through the Libraries NI OU learning hub which helps students with studying techniques as well as providing advice for coping with exam anxieties.
- 4.7 She then went on to highlight Pure Mental, founded in 2019 by Jay Buntin and Matthew Taylor after both students were discussing the pressure of exams whilst studying in Lisburn City Library. The Director of Library Services explained that the organisation's goal is to improve mental health awareness and education in schools across Northern Ireland, with a strong focus on youth involvement and engagement. As part of their work, key staff members from the organisation visited Lisburn City Library in May to engage with students and provide supportive and helpful information for the many students studying in the library.
- 4.8 The Director of Library Services then referred to the Libraries NI's Big Summer Read which encourages reading during the summer months and offers a number of reader development initiatives designed to open up reading opportunities for children and foster a love of books. This year the Big Summer Read was delivered in partnership with schools across Northern Ireland in a pilot to test and evaluate the approach. The theme was 'Ready Steady Read!' and focussed on sports and being active. It was noted that the target to reach 150,000 children's book loans in July has been exceeded and that a full report on Big Summer Read will be brought to Committee later in the year.
- 4.9 Ms A Adair reported on Refugee Week which took place from 19 – 25 June 2023. The theme was 'compassion' and she gave a flavour of the events held across libraries such as themed storytimes, Rhythm and Rhymes and craft sessions. She also reported on a partnership event with Red Cross NI, an afternoon fun session was held in Belfast Central Library including games, craft and stories from Armstrong Storytelling Trust's Janice Witherspoon.
- 4.10 The Director of Library Services informed the Committee that 12 members of staff attended training at the BBC in digital content creation and commended the short film produced showcasing libraries and library services which was edited by the BBC and included music from the Ulster Orchestra.

- 4.11 The Director of Library Services then highlighted the partnership with the Department of Finance Go On NI Team. The process to apply for free school meals had changed for 2022/23 and parents were required to register and create an account before applying. She reported that Go On NI staff held sessions in 14 libraries during the summer, utilising library spaces and IT resources, to give assistance and support for parents to complete the process.
- 4.12 Ms A Adair reported on Libraries NI's participation in this year's Belfast Pride Parade held on Saturday 29 July, one of the biggest celebrations of diversity in the UK, attracting over 70,000 attendees. 27 members of staff with friends and family and a Mobile Library participated in the parade and two officers staffed an information and library membership stall at the Pride Village. She highlighted the short promotional film that was created to highlight Libraries NI role in the parade.
- 4.13 The Director of Library Services also highlighted the recent purchase of some sensory resources for children allocated to Kells and Connor, Larne and Lisnaskea libraries where sensory storytimes for children are currently being piloted. Feedback to date has been positive and further training for staff will be delivered by the Armstrong Storytelling Trust.
- 4.14 Ms A Adair drew attention to the following recent and forthcoming events and Libraries NI's participation:
- DfC Museums and Libraries Branch visit to Belfast Central Library, 12 May 2023
  - World Breastfeeding Day, 10 August 2023
  - 'Splendid Press' Exhibition, Cookstown Library, 4 – 29 September 2023
  - European Heritage Open Day, 9 September 2023
  - Launch of 33<sup>rd</sup> season of Tullycarnet Yarnspinnners with guest Storyteller Colm Sands
  - Landline Switch-off 2025 Information Stands, 20 and 27 September 2023
  - 'The Fisher Flag' unveiling, Newry City Library, 29 September 2023
  - Positive Ageing Month, October 2023
  - Book Week NI in Partnership with BBC NI, 16 – 22 October 2023.
- 4.15 The Director of Library Services referred to the BookTrust Storytime Prize, an annual national initiative designed to support library staff to inspire and engage families with children under five to share stories together and encourage them to make visiting their local public library a regular part of family life. She explained that during September BookTrust will be delivering a collection of shortlisted books to every library across Northern Ireland and that each library will host a storytime session between 23 September and 24 March when children and parents will have the opportunity to vote for their favourite title. Their votes will then be added to others across the UK to determine the nation's prizewinning title.
- 4.16 The Director of Library Services then drew attention to recent and upcoming significant library anniversaries. She gave an overview of the celebrations that were held during the summer to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Bronte

Library, Rathfriland and Tandragee Library and the planned programme of events to celebrate the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Belfast Central Library on 13 October 2023.

- 4.17 Ms A Adair referred to the recent Decade Roundtable event held in the Linenhall Library on 11 May attended by Eileen McVerry, Senior Services Manager, Cultural Heritage. The event was hosted by The Community Relations Council (CRC) and The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to commemorate the outstanding contribution Dr Eamon Phoenix made in the 10 year period 2012 - 2022 which marked the Decade of Centenaries. She highlighted that Dr Phoenix had attended and spoken at many of the commemorative events during that time including those delivered by Libraries NI. It was noted that the partnership working of the Roundtable has come to a natural end along with the decade, however the Community Relations Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund are very much open to future collaborations.
- 4.18 The Chairperson thanked the Director of Library Services for a very informative report displaying the diverse range of activities in libraries.

**5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2023 SC.03.09.23**

- 5.1 On a proposal by Professor B Cullen, seconded by Councillor A McAuley, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 11 May 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 6 July 2023.

**6. MATTERS ARISING**

- 6.1 The Director of Library Services confirmed that she met with Committee Members, Councillor Julie Gilmour, Councillor Andrew McAuley and John Peto together with Glenn Beattie, Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications, and Sean Beattie, Head of Service, following a request at a Services Committee meeting for Board Members to participate in the process of reviewing communication to library customers via a working group. The meeting was a preliminary meeting to give an insight into the role of Strategic Communications and Marketing in Libraries NI and the current marketing and communications to library customers with a view to establishing if a working group is the most appropriate way forward. She reported that Glenn Beattie gave a presentation and a useful discussion took place. It was noted that Members agreed that the insight into marketing was very informative and that a working group was not required at this time. She highlighted that feedback from Board Members was welcomed at any time.
- 6.2 Ms A Adair referred to an action arising from the meeting to explore the potential to rebrand Libraries NI and confirmed that a further meeting would be scheduled to discuss this further.

## **7. DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2023/24**

**SC.04.09.23**

- 7.1 Mr S Beattie, Head of Service, introduced the draft Service Plan for 2023/24 which identified updated targets in line with the Business Plan which was presented to the Board in July 2023 following a financial allocation for 2023/24.
- 7.2 Mr S Beattie highlighted the addition of a target to 'develop, implement and monitor financial control measures' and the following which had been updated with target figures:
- loans and renewals
  - e loans
  - PAT sessions
  - sickness absence.
- 7.3 The Head of Service gave an update on progress in achieving the loan targets as at the end of August and confirmed that a full update on progress of the service plan as at the end of quarter two would be presented to Committee in November.
- 7.4 Members noted the impact of a lack of investment on achieving targets and service provision and highlighted the need to continue to raise this with the Department. The Chief Executive confirmed that Libraries NI continues to lobby the Department for Communities on this matter.
- 7.5 Professor B Cullen emphasised the importance of capturing customer feedback on the value of the library service and the impact of the lack of investment in new book stock.
- 7.6 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Professor B Cullen, the Services Committee approved the Service Plan 2023/24.

## **8. FEES AND CHARGES 2024/25**

**SC.05.09.23**

- 8.1 Ms M Bell, Head of Service, presented the review of Fees and Charges for 2024/25. She explained the rationale for the changes to and factors affecting charges, highlighting the following increases:
- Inter-Library Loans from £7.00 to £10.00
  - A4 black and white photocopying and printing from 15p to 20p per page
  - A3 black and white photocopying and printing from 30p to 40p per page.
- 8.2 The Head of Service highlighted the lost book fee as a potential barrier and outlined the current arrangements i.e. borrowers under the age of five are not liable to charges for lost books. She noted that a review of Libraries NI's approach to charging for lost children's books and the age when borrowers start to pay for lost books was underway. The findings of the review would be incorporated in the fees and charges recommendations for 2025/26.
- 8.3 The Head of Service confirmed that Departmental approval of the revised Fees

and Charges would be sought following approval at the Board meeting in October.

- 8.4 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Professor B Cullen, the Services Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Fees and Charges 2024/25 to the Board.

## **9. GREEN LIBRARIES MANIFESTO**

**SC.06.09.23**

- 9.1 Mr S Beattie, Head of Service, introduced the report on the Green Library Manifesto informing Members that Libraries NI had become a signatory on 15 August 2023. He outlined the principles of the manifesto that signatories commit to with an emphasis to put sustainability at the heart of their work and planning, to embrace innovation that will help change current practices and to grow and share knowledge.

- 9.2 The Head of Service reminded Members of environmental initiatives developed in Libraries NI in recent years such as seed libraries, wildflower planting projects, gardening clubs, the installation of swift boxes and a climate change exhibition. He also gave an overview of initiatives that Libraries NI is implementing through the 2023/24 service plan.

- 9.3 Mr S Beattie explained that whilst signing the Green Libraries Manifesto in itself will not open funding opportunities, it will provide a visible statement to current and potential partners of our commitment to adopting and promoting positive actions, enhancing the potential for collaboration with other library authorities and stakeholders and in turn contribute to potential widening of access and participation in library services.

- 9.4 Members noted their support for the Green Libraries Manifesto and commended Libraries NI on work in this area.

## **10. BOOK WEEK NI 2023**

- 10.1 Ms J Reid, Deputy Head of Service, presented the programme of events for the eighth Book Week NI which will run from Monday 16 to Sunday 22 of October 2023. Book Week NI is a joint initiative between Libraries NI and the BBC in Northern Ireland focussing on the importance of books, writers, reading and libraries.

- 10.2 The Deputy Head of Service informed Members of this year's call to action 'Our Big Read' where schools, reading groups, families, businesses and organisations will be encouraged to share their favourite books. She highlighted that Clive Myrie and the Mastermind Crew, the cast of the drama Blue Lights and the Zoe Ball breakfast show would all be sharing their Big Read. In addition, Book Week Ambassadors will again support and raise the profile of the initiative.

- 10.3 The Deputy Head of Service gave an overview of each online and in person event with high profile authors and BBC NI broadcasters including a Transatlantic Reading Group online meet up. She then went on to outline the initiatives and events that each of the following partner organisations would be involved in during the week:
- Ulster University
  - Queen's University Belfast
  - Open University
  - Northern Ireland Office
  - Translink
  - Armstrong Storytelling Trust
  - Education Authority.
- 10.4 The Deputy Head of Service referred to the established feature of Book Week NI 'Love Your Library Day' which will be held on Wednesday 18 October, the purpose of which is to actively welcome and encourage new library members as well as reminding former customers why they enjoyed coming into the library. Local stakeholders will also be invited to come to their library and join in activities, see what is happening and share their Big Read.
- 10.5 Ms J Reid encouraged Board Members to get involved by attending events, visiting their local library and using the hashtags online.
- 10.6 Members commended the quality and quantity of events planned for Book Week NI 2023 and pledged their support.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 11.1 There was no other business.

## **12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 12.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would take place on Thursday 16 November 2023 at 10:30am and was due to be held in Lisburn City Library.

## **13. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

- 13.1 The meeting ended at 11:44pm.
- 13.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:
- Councillor J Gilmour left at 11:02pm.

Signed: Councillor A McAuley

Date: 16 November 2023