

## 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 December 2022 at 10:30 am

#### PRESENT

Professor Bernard Cullen  
Councillor J Gilmour

Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson

Alderman Thomas Burns  
Councillor Alistair Cathcart  
Mrs Deirdre Kenny  
Councillor Donal Lyons  
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan  
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE  
Mr Harry Reid  
Dr Margaret Ward  
Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP  
Miss Linda Wilson

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Jim O'Hagan  
Mr Desi Miskelly  
Ms Margaret Bell  
Mrs Jacqui McKinstry  
Ms Stefani Millar

Chief Executive  
Director of Business Support  
Head of Service  
Human Resource Manager (Item 14)  
Boardroom Apprentice

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Mr John Peto  
Mrs Adrienne Adair

Director of Library Services

#### 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 welcomed Mrs M Bell, Head of Service to the meeting and informed Members that Mrs J McKinstry, Human Resource Manager would join the meeting for Item 14: Staffing Matter which would be taken In Committee.
- 3.2 Members were informed that prior to leaving office the Minister for the Department for Communities (DfC) had extended the current term of appointment of those Members whose terms were due to end on 31 December 2022. Mrs D Kenny, Dr M Ward and Mr H Reid had agreed to serve on the Libraries NI Board for a further 6 months from 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023. He also reported that his term of appointment as Chairperson which had been due to end on 30 April 2023 had been extended until 31 October 2023.
- 3.3 In response to a question from Councillor B Webb regarding terms of appointment of Councillor Board Members, the Chief Executive agreed to seek clarification from the Department on this matter.

### **4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

- 4.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the paper which had been circulated, drawing attention in particular to the undernoted items:

4.2 Financial Pressures – Correspondence with the Department for Communities  
It was noted that further information would be provided at Agenda Item 9: Financial Pressures: Update.

4.3 Book Week NI: 17 – 23 October 2022  
Councillor A Cathcart congratulated the staff at Bangor Carnegie Library on the success of Book Week. He referred to the 'Tea and Coffee' which had been provided during this week asking if this was available in all libraries. The Chief Executive responded that 'Tea and Newspapers' was provided in many libraries and that Officers would review budgets with a view to expanding this activity. Councillor Cathcart referred to discussions he previously had with Officers regarding the provision of a Café in the library and also the ongoing issue of signage. It was noted that Bangor Carnegie Library was housed in a listed building so signage could not be erected on the building and that a planning application was underway to facilitate installation of a free standing sign. Councillor Cathcart reminded Officers that Bangor was now a City and that consideration should be given to reflecting this in the library branding.

4.4 Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee Mornings, September 2022  
The Chief Executive reported that in September over 90 library locations had participated in the annual Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee morning which had raised approximately £13,677 for cancer support. He thanked all staff and customers involved noting that it was an amazing achievement and a reflection of the generosity of library staff and customers during very challenging times.

Chair of CILIP Ireland

4.5 Members asked that their congratulations be conveyed to Ms J Reid, Deputy Head of Service on her recent appointment as Chair of CILIP Ireland.

4.6 Members noted all other items included on Chief Executive's Business.

**5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2022**  
**LNI 01.12.22**

5.1 On a proposal by Mrs D Kenny, seconded by Councillor B Webb, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 13 October 2022 were approved.

**6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD**  
**ON 13 OCTOBER 2022** **LNI 02.12.22**

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

Item 10.8/10.9: Libraries NI Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 and Letter of Representation

6.2 Members noted that the Letter of Representation together with the signed Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 had been submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification on 17 October 2022.

Item 11.12: Management Report, Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April to September 2022)

6.3 It was noted that a copy of the signed Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 30 September 2022 had been submitted to the Department for Communities (DfC) on 14 October 2022.

Item 12.6: 2022/23 Budget Management Options

6.4 The Chief Executive confirmed that as requested by Board Members, he had written to the Permanent Secretary, DfC on 17 October 2022 highlighting the severity of the financial situation and the challenges faced by Libraries NI. An update would be provided to Members at Agenda Item 9.

**7. MANAGEMENT REPORT** **LNI 03.12.22**

7.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support briefed the Board on the Management Report as follows:

Key Performance Indicators 2022/23 Quarter 2: July – September 2022

**LNI 03.12.22 (i)**

7.2 The Chief Executive reported that despite the challenging operational environment the majority of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were on target to be achieved. He discussed the areas where progress has been reported as 'Amber' which include the Triennial Customer Survey, Payment of Invoices and Internal Audit Service targets and standards providing background and progress on each.

7.3 He then drew attention to the two areas which had been reported as 'Red' i.e. the Annual Net Spend and overall sickness absence updating members on work being carried out in each of these areas. The Chairperson drew attention to the sickness absence figures and asked that further information be provided and that officers consider benchmarking sickness absence against other organisations.

7.4 Members noted that the remaining 15 KPIs were on track to be achieved.

Business Plan 2022/23: Progress Report: April to September 2022

LNI 03.12.22 (ii)

7.5 The Chief Executive drew attention to the six month update on the Business Plan 2022/23 and reported that good progress had been made in respect of the majority of Business Plan targets. He drew attention to those targets which had been reported as 'Amber' or 'Red' and provided information on targets not on track to be achieved. It was noted that some targets duplicated those on the KPI Report but for those targets i.e. stock, Partnership Agreement and review of the Staff Appraisal System, the Chief Executive provided information on why the target had not been achieved and steps being taken to resolve these issues.

Finance Report: October 2022

LNI 03.12.22 (iii)

7.6 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent spend to October 2022 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 24 November 2022. He reported that the Resource Report at the end of October 2022 projected a deficit of £474,000 and the Capital Report projected an underspend of £4.00 Members were informed that these reports had been superseded by events in November and December 2022, a full report of which would be provided at Agenda Item 9.

7.7 Members noted the report.

**8. BOARD EFFECTIVENESS 2022/23**

**LNI 04.12.22**

8.1 The Chairperson drew attention to the Board Effectiveness Review 2022/23.

8.2 Members were reminded of the guidance contained in the Board Operating Framework relating to the regular review of Board and Committee effectiveness and of the good practice guide produced by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). Based on the NIAO guidance a checklist has been developed to assist the Board to evaluate its effectiveness. It was noted that this checklist should be seen as a starting point only as there may be other issues that the Board collectively or Members individually may wish to consider.

8.3 The Chief Executive drew attention to Appendix 1 which had been prepared based on the NIAO guidance and which had been completed based on feedback received from last year's review and asked Members to consider the information contained in the document.

- 8.4 He then drew attention to Appendix 2 which had been prepared as a result of a recommendation from an audit carried out by Departmental auditors on their process which suggested Board Members be provided an opportunity to submit additional views or comments on any other matter relating to the review of Board/Committee effectiveness. The Chief Executive asked that completed forms or other comments be returned to him no later than 16 January 2023.
- 8.5 Members noted that individual Committees have started or are about to start reviewing their effectiveness, including the continued relevance of the Schemes of Delegation and the process should be completed early in the New Year. A draft Action Plan based on all of the reviews would be presented to the Board at its meeting on 9 February 2023.
- 8.6 Councillor B Webb drew attention to Item 9 on Appendix 1 and suggested that a comment should be included regarding the risk to the organisation of a challenging financial situation. The Chairperson also suggested that the lack of a current library strategy could also be added.

## **9. FINANCIAL PRESSURES: UPDATE**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive updated Members on the current financial situation since the last meeting of the Board held on 13 October 2022.
- 9.2 As previously reported he had written to the DfC Permanent Secretary on 17 October 2022 and had received a response on 4 November 2022. A further briefing document dated 10 November 2022 had been sent to Mr J McCord, Acting Director, Culture Division, DfC regarding funding for 2023/24 and longer term sustainability of the library service.
- 9.3 The Chief Executive reported that he had attended a number of briefings and meetings including a meeting of the DfC / ALB Leaders Forum on 1 December 2022 in Finaghy Library. At the latest meeting with the Department held on 7 December 2022 he had been advised that the Department were going to allocate an additional £1.5 million to Libraries NI to purchase stock and that the Department intended to respond positively to Libraries NI in respect of other pressures which had been highlighted to them. This additional allocation would be added to the indicative baseline budget resulting in the organisation being able to provide services until the end of the current financial year without having to impose further financial controls. It also enabled the Senior Management Team to focus on the budget for 2023/24 and the work required to establish a realistic baseline budget for Libraries NI going forward. The Chief Executive stated that he awaited formal notification of these additional allocations but was hopeful of an improved budget position going forward which he was pleased to report to Members. He thanked Members for their support during this process.
- 9.4 In response to a question from Councillor B Webb, the Director of Business Support confirmed that the additional £1.5 million for stock would be fully spent by the end of the financial year. He confirmed that a framework was in place for purchasing stock and members of the stock team were already working to purchase items.

9.5 Mrs W Osborne commended the work of Officers to manage the financial position and the positive outcomes this had achieved and expressed her concern that there was a risk of baseline budgets being further reduced in 2023/24

9.6 The Chief Executive noted the concern stating that while additional 2022/23 allocations had partly recognised the inherent difficulties presented by inadequate baseline funding the position for future years would be influenced by the overall funding environment of DfC and the public sector as a whole.

**10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2022 LNI 05.12.22**

10.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2022 noting that an oral report of this meeting had been given at the Board Meeting held on 13 October 2022, and at that meeting the Board had approved the following:

- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2021/22
- Libraries NI Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22
- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement 30 September 2022
- Corporate Risk Register September 2022

10.2 She reminded Members that at the October Board Meeting a full report of discussions which had taken place at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 12 October 2022 had been provided and that no other matters considered by the Committee had required Board approval.

10.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 12 October 2022 subject to an amendment to the spelling of Councillor A Cathcart's Christian name.

**11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2022 LNI 06.12.22**

11.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2022.

11.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 17 November 2022.

11.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the Review of Reading and Reader Development Policy.

**12. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022** **LNI 07.12.22**

- 12.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Alderman T Burns, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2022.
- 12.2 The Committee Chairperson drew attention to the discussion on sickness absence within the organisation and thanked the Head of Human Resources and her team for their work to reduce this figure.
- 12.3 Members noted that given the timing of the Business Support Committee meeting and its close proximity to the December Board meeting the minutes had yet to be reviewed and formally approved by the Committee. It was agreed that following the scheduled January 2023 Business Support Committee the approved minutes of the November 2022 Committee would be brought back to the Board for approval and adoption. Following discussion of the process for the approval of Committee minutes, it was agreed that Officers would investigate the operational implications of delays in bringing forward Committee minutes for Board approval.

**13. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS: JANUARY 2023 TO MARCH 2024** **LNI 08.12.22**

- 13.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the proposed Schedule of Meetings for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2024 and asked Members to note the dates in their diaries.

**14. STAFFING MATTER (IN COMMITTEE)**

- 14.1 Officers withdrew from the meeting. Mrs J McKinstry HR Manager joined the meeting for this item.
- 14.2 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Mrs D Kenny Members agreed to go into Committee to discuss two staffing Matters.
- 14.3 While in Committee the Chief Executive briefed Members on the appointment process for the post of Director of Library Services. Members were reminded that the Board had approved delegated authority to progress this appointment. On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, seconded by Mrs D Kenny the Board formally noted its approval of the appointment of Ms A Adair to the post of Director of Library Services effective from 1 December 2022.
- 14.4 Members also noted that the recruitment process for the subsequent vacancy of Head of Service, South and East was now being progressed. The Chief Executive reported that as this was a third tier role in the organisation structure Board approval was required to authorise any appointment arising from the recruitment process. On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor B Webb the Board gave its approval for Officers to take forward the recruitment

process for the position of Head of Service, South and East and for the Chairperson to approve on its behalf any appointment.

- 14.5 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Mrs D Kenny Members agreed to come out of Committee.

**15. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

- 15.1 The Chairperson drew attention to a letter dated 6 December 2022 from the DfC Permanent Secretary regarding 'Raising Concerns/Whistleblowing'. Members noted that the letter was intended to raise general awareness of clear whistleblowing procedures in the public sector. It was agreed that a copy of this correspondence together with the Chairperson's response would be brought to the January meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

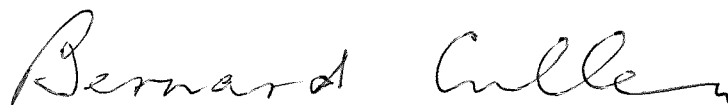
**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 16.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 9 February 2023 at 10.30 am in Lisburn City Library or remotely via video link. The Chairperson wished Board Members the compliments of the season.

**17. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

- 17.1 The meeting ended at 12.00 noon.
- 17.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.

Signed:



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Professor Bernard Cullen, Chairperson

Date:

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9 Feb 2023