

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held remotely via Zoom
on Thursday, 19 May 2022 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Councillor Cathal Mallaghan	Chairperson
Professor Bernard Cullen	
Councillor Julie Gilmour	
Ms Deirdre Kenny	
Mr John Peto	Vice-Chairperson
Mr Harry Reid	
Dr Margaret Ward	

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
Ms Adrienne Adair	Head of Service
Mr Sean Beattie	Deputy Head of Service
Ms Julie Reid	Deputy Head of Service
Ms Kirsty McClelland	Service Development Manager
Ms Patricia Curran	Area Manager
Ms Ruth Watson	District Manager
Ms Joanne Brown	Information and Learning Services Officer
Ms Angela Hodkinson	Boardroom Apprentice
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

The Chairperson welcomed Members and staff to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 There were no apologies.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict 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 There was no Chairperson's business.

4. OFFICERS' BUSINESS

SC.01.05.22

4.1 Ms A Adair, Head of Service referred to the report that had been circulated drawing attention to the recent launch of the Out of Hours Service in Omagh Library offering an additional 33 hours library access. Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Omagh is the first larger library with a substantial rural hinterland to offer the service. Ms A Adair reported that the launch event highlighted library services to stakeholders, partners and customers and that use to date has been encouraging.

4.2 The Head of Service referred to the Summer Reading Challenge 2022 which will take place from Saturday 25 June to Saturday 3 September 2022. This year Libraries NI will be using the promotional material developed by The Reading Agency who has partnered with the Science Museum Group to create a science themed Challenge branded the 'Gadgeteers'. As in previous years, children will be invited to challenge themselves to read any number of books and will be awarded a medal and certificate once they reach their personal goal. Activities will be available online and events for children and their families will be held in libraries throughout the summer to support the challenge.

4.3 Ms A Adair reported that during Refugee Week, 20 – 26 June 2022, Marketing will be posting daily on social media promoting stock that examines the refugee experience as part of the Simple Acts campaign. She then went on to describe the services Libraries NI is providing for refugees from Ukraine. Libraries NI's Customer Group Team has prepared an information sheet for Ukrainian refugees who will be living in Northern Ireland. The Head of Service informed the Committee that Libraries NI has been in discussion with Councils through the Community Planning partnerships, who are preparing "welcome packs" for the new arrivals including information on the full range of services available to the refugees and how to access them. The Libraries NI information sheet (translated into Ukrainian) will be included in this pack and will also be made available in the welcome centres for the Ukrainian families. She also highlighted the Reachdeck translation software which is available on all public access terminals and provides translation for over 90 different languages including Ukrainian.

4.4 Ms A Adair went on to describe Libraries NI's participation in the Belfast Book Festival which will take place from Monday 13 to Friday 17 June 2022 in the Crescent Arts Centre. Libraries NI will provide a "pop up" library and visitors will be able to join the library service, borrow material available in the pop-up library and return items. Libraries NI will provide staffing daily from 10:30am to 5:00pm and outside of these times Book Festival Volunteers will be on hand to promote Libraries NI's services. Rhythm and Rhyme sessions and Book Clinics will be

delivered throughout the week and the festival programme will be distributed across the library network.

- 4.5 The Head of Service then referred to the Climate Change exhibitions that will be touring libraries across the service from April 2022 to March 2023. There are three sets of a large exhibition which highlight some of the key impacts of climate change and details ten actions that individuals can do to mitigate/lessen the impact of climate change. The large exhibition will visit 30 libraries for approximately one month before March 2023. There are also 36 small pop-up displays, also listing the ten mitigating actions, which will be rotated across smaller libraries. The content of the exhibition was devised in partnership with Climate NI. To complement the exhibition, resources from Libraries NI's collections on climate change e.g. patents on wind and solar energy will be displayed in Belfast Central Library. At the end of the year, it is hoped to offer the exhibition to partner organisations and schools.
- 4.6 Ms A Adair informed the Committee that throughout 2021/22 Libraries NI delivered a number of initiatives including Family Fun Days to promote the benefits of library membership. The Fun Days were held in 12 libraries combining a mix of library and facilitated events with Mr Hullabaloo, Theatre Without Walls and Science Starz.
- 4.7 The Head of Service then described two Age Friendly initiatives that were held recently in Omagh Library in partnership with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) Community Planning partners, FODC Age Friendly Officer and Compassionate Communities. She gave an overview of "Lovers Retreat – a Reminiscence Trail" and "Death Positive Libraries". "Lovers Retreat" was funded by the Department for Communities (DfC) Access and Inclusion Programme to encourage and enable older people to lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives. The Death Positive Library initiative in Omagh was led by Compassionate Communities and features a dedicated bookshelf in Omagh Library with books on death, dying and grief to help people discuss these difficult and emotive subjects. The launch of the initiative on 4 May 2022 was reported by the BBC with an article on the BBC NI news online.
- 4.8 The Head of Service went on to describe a further initiative whereby Mid and East Antrim Age Well partnership approached Libraries NI to participate in their information days in local retail locations in Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne. In their work with older people, the partnership is aware that many struggle digitally through lack of both access and the necessary skills to navigate and operate in a digital world. Through participating, Libraries NI's staff will be able to signpost individuals to the extensive list of digital sessions both on Zoom and face-to-face in our libraries. Staff will also use the opportunity to promote library membership, services and programmes.
- 4.9 Ms A Adair gave an overview of the 'Here if you Need' initiative that Larne Library is participating in, delivered by Equality Period NI to normalise the provision of free sanitary products in wash room facilities throughout the Mid and East Antrim

Council area. The project aims to reach those who are struggling financially in a discreet and understated way. It was noted that a second project is also being developed with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

- 4.10 The Head of Service reported that during lockdown the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) closed counter service points and offered an online MOT booking system and approached Libraries NI to facilitate a pilot in four libraries (Enniskillen, Irvinestown, Lisnaskea and Omagh) which would enable the DVA to use library computers and assist their customers through the process of booking an MOT online. The pilot was monitored and an evaluation is underway.
- 4.11 The Head of Service went on to describe the UnBoxed project (previously Festival UK 22) which features 10 ground-breaking commissions designed to reach millions, bring people together and showcase UK creativity globally. She reported that Derry Central Library hosted six “Mini Professor Workshops” for more than 130 children and 50 adults and was also the venue for a pop-up studio where local people were photographed so their image could be included in the large-scale animated live shows in March. She also described Storytrails, another of the UnBoxed commissions. It is being led by The Reading Agency and aims to deliver an immersive storytelling spectacular in 15 libraries across the UK including Omagh Library. Libraries NI staff have been involved in training and community consultation to help plan and deliver the programme of events which will combine technology and local historical knowledge to bring untold regional stories to life.
- 4.12 Ms A Adair also described the “Our Place in Space” project created by artist and children’s author Oliver Jeffers and scientist Professor Stephen Smartt (QUB). It is an epic scale recreation of the solar system, a 10-kilometre 3D sculpture trail in Northern Ireland and Cambridge. She reported that the sculpture trail has an interactive Augmented Reality app along with a programme of digital events and learning activities. Libraries NI is participating in the project through hosting five Minecraft sessions delivered by the Nerve Centre from April to October 2022.
- 4.13 The Head of Service informed Members of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) 87th World Library and Information Congress which will take place in Dublin from 26 - 29 July 2022 with the theme Inspire, Engage, Enable, Connect. She advised that the Congress is the international flagship professional event for the library and information services sector and that this is the first time the conference has been held in Ireland. It presents an opportunity to network, see best practice, garner ideas and experience the international dimension of the Library and Information sector. The Committee noted that the Deputy Heads of Service, Sean Beattie and Julie Reid, made successful Poster applications and will be presenting on Libraries NI’s service offers, the Virtual Choir and Book Week NI.
- 4.14 Ms A Adair drew attention to two recent meetings. The Chief Executive met with Stuart Hamilton, Head of Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency, Ireland, on 31 March 2022 to discuss potential areas of

shared interest for library services in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Ms M Bell, Head of Service, attended a meeting with the Welsh Government Libraries Department on 1 April 2022 to discuss the Welsh Government's vision for a single digital presence for public libraries in Wales.

4.15 The Head of Service highlighted the recently published Carnegie Report - Engaging the public with research: a toolkit for higher education and library partnerships. She advised that Carnegie UK and Libraries Connected through learning from the Engaging Libraries Phase 2 programme has produced an interactive online tool kit for public libraries to encourage partnerships with higher education institutions and public engagement with research. Libraries NI's Turning Heads project was part of this programme and is illustrated in the toolkit.

4.16 The Chairperson thanked Ms A Adair for a very comprehensive report.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2022 SC.02.05.22

5.1 On a proposal by Dr M Ward, seconded by Mr J Peto, the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

6. MATTERS ARISING

6.1 There were no matters arising.

7. DRAFT SERVICE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER 2022/23 SC.03.05.22

7.1 Mr S Beattie presented the Draft Service Plan 2022/23 and confirmed that an indicative financial allocation had been received since the plan was last presented to Committee and therefore a number of targets had been updated, namely:

- the following levels of participation:
 - 3,400,000 loans and renewals
 - 1,400,000 e-loans
 - 240,000 active members – 5.5% increase on 2021/22 out-turn figure
 - 50,000 new members
- deliver 15,000 events that promote social inclusion and address loneliness
- achieve 75,000 Wi-Fi sessions
- achieve 275,000 PAT sessions.

7.2 Mr S Beattie provided the context in which targets were set, taking account of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and the focus on renewing, refocusing and re-energising the library service offer.

7.3 The Deputy Head of Service then presented the risk register which details the risks identified in relation to the service plan and confirmed that no new risks were

identified. He drew attention to three risks, Corporate Governance, Resources and COVID-19 where the risk rating score had changed and provided an explanation for each.

- 7.4 The Services Committee commended the breadth and range of inspiring targets in the service plan and welcomed, in particular, those around supporting refugees and generating user stories. Members discussed the value of user stories and potential promotional opportunities, in response to a question the Chief Executive confirmed that user stories will be shared with appropriate stakeholders.
- 7.5 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Services Committee approved the Draft Service Plan and Risk Register 2022/23.

8. REVIEW OF DIGITAL INCLUSION POLICY SC.04.05.22

- 8.1 Mr S Beattie introduced the Digital Inclusion Policy explaining that the policy sets out Libraries NI's approach to promoting digital inclusion through services and facilities and was presented to the Committee in line with the policy review cycle. He gave examples of how Libraries NI has, through its digital services, supported other government departments with initiatives such as the High Street Voucher Scheme, booking an MOT online and COVID vaccination certificates.
- 8.2 The Deputy Head of Service confirmed that there were no significant changes as a result of the policy review and that minor amendments were made to reflect organisational changes.
- 8.3 On a proposal by Dr M Ward, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Digital Inclusion Policy to the Board.

9. SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2021/22 SC.05.05.22

- 9.1 Ms J Reid, Deputy Head of Service, presented the Service Plan Progress Report 2021/22 which demonstrates progress on achieving targets as at 31 March 2022. She gave an overview of the government COVID-19 restrictions which impacted the services offered during 2021/22 and it was noted that despite the challenging circumstances of the pandemic, the majority of targets were achieved.
- 9.2 The Deputy Head of Service highlighted a number of significant achievements, for example:
- removal of overdue charges
 - Summer Reading Challenge
 - Give it a Go Month
 - Book Week NI
 - delivery of reader development initiatives.

- 9.3 She then went on to describe the successful Turning Heads project which was delivered by Libraries NI, in partnership with Ulster University, Beyond Skin, and the Armstrong Storytelling Trust, as part of the Carnegie Engaging Libraries which aims to engage people with research. The aim of Turning Heads was to spark conversation and challenge stereotypes while exploring the cultural and societal significance of hair. The Deputy Head of Service shared a short video clip of the project.
- 9.4 Ms J Reid also highlighted the targets that were not achieved and explained the associated reasons for each.
- 9.5 Services Committee paid tribute to the quality and range of work carried out during 2021/22 and noted the Service Plan Progress Report.

10. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PRESENTATION

- 10.1 Ms K McClelland introduced herself as the Service Development Manager with responsibility for Customer Experience throughout the organisation and an operational responsibility for branch libraries, mobiles and homecall in four council areas. She outlined the remit of her role as Service Development Manager for Customer Experience referring to the service plan target to create a charter which would outline staff commitment to customers.
- 10.2 The Service Development Manager then reported on a series of workshops that brought together a range of staff from across the service to collect views and ideas to develop the draft charter.
- 10.3 Learning was also incorporated through literature reviews and best practice from other organisations. She advised that the terminology 'charter' was replaced with 'promise' during the process to reflect the feedback from the workshops and highlighted that the Customer Promise would be a live document providing a foundation for the Customer Experience pillar of work, including upcoming customer service training.
- 10.4 Ms K McClelland drew attention to the five descriptor words that were agreed to underpin Libraries NI's commitment to the Customer Promise, namely: welcoming; supportive; learning; fun; and connecting. She then shared the associated phrases that are moulded around the descriptor words and a copy of the draft promotional poster.
- 10.5 The Service Development Manager went on to explain the next steps in embedding the Customer Promise internally and that external consultation was now required with customers to create a public facing document.
- 10.6 The Services Committee commended Ms K McClelland on a very comprehensive piece of work and thanked her for the presentation.

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, 15 September 2022 at 10:30am.

13. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

13.1 The meeting ended at 12:16pm.

13.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.

Signed: Councillor Cathal Mallaghan

Date: 15 September 2022