

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 29 September 2022 at 10:30am

(Hybrid via Video Link and in person at Lisburn City Library)

VL – Attendance via video link

IP – Attendance in person

PRESENT

(IP) Alderman Thomas Burns	Chairperson
(IP) Miss Linda Wilson	Vice Chairperson
(VL) Professor Bernard Cullen	Chairperson of the Board
(VL) Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP	
(VL) Councillor Cheryl Brownlee	
(VL) Ms Stefani Millar	Boardroom Apprentice

IN ATTENDANCE

(IP) Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
(IP) Mr Desi Miskelly	Director of Business Support
(VL) Mr Tim Neeson	Assets Manager
(VL) Ms Rita McNamee	Finance Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	
Mr Desi Curry	Head of ICU/ICT
Ms Jacqui McKinstry	Head of Human Resources

Councillor Brownlee had advised that she would be late joining the meeting.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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.

2.2 No interests were declared.

3 CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

3.1 The Chairperson reminded Members that as part of the Leadership Development Plan it had been agreed that some staff should attend and observe Board and Committee meetings as part of their personal development and welcomed District Manager Karen Woods.

4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

BSC.01.09.22

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support advised that there had been no significant change to the financial situation since the Board Planning Day in early September, the budget position remained exceptionally challenging with a sizeable deficit predicted due largely to the continuing absence of normal budget setting mechanisms and the pressure created by increased utility and staffing costs. There had been no formal monitoring rounds and Management continued to engage with DfC. An update would be provided to the Board in October along with proposals for contingency measures to control the projected overspend.
- 4.2 Miss L Wilson commented that the financial situation was very difficult and requested that DfC be advised that the Business Support Committee were very concerned by this.
- 4.3 Alderman T Burns and Professor B Cullen endorsed Miss Wilson's comments.
- 4.4 The Director of Business Support confirmed that he would make DfC aware of the Committee's concerns.
- 4.5 The Director of Business Support updated the Committee regarding the Fivemiletown Library Redevelopment Project, reporting that in June the main contractor had issued notice to terminate, on the basis of the project no longer being economically viable from their perspective, consequently work had stopped on site. The original library building had been demolished, site was vacant, mobile library services were being provided, and local political representatives had been updated regarding the situation. Work was underway to complete the outstanding project design work with an aim that the project would go back out to tender shortly and it was hoped that a new contractor would be on site in the new year.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 MAY 2022

BSC.02.09.22

- 5.1 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor B Webb, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee on 26 May 2022, which had been submitted to the Board on 07 July 2022, were approved.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2022

BSC.03.09.22

- 6.1 The Director of Business Support advised that at the May meeting a review of the Business Support Risk Register had been discussed, both the Corporate and Business Support Risk Registers were scheduled for review in October. The Director of Business Support proposed that an updated Risk Register would be brought to the November meeting for the Committee's consideration.

7 JOB TRANSFER POLICY

BSC.04.09.22

- 7.1 The Director of Business Support presented the new Job Transfer Policy which had been developed to provide a framework within which employees could register their interest to permanently transfer to another post/location throughout Libraries NI at the same substantive grade within the eligibility requirements of the Policy. The Policy aimed to support employees to develop experience in other areas of work. If approved it was intended that the Policy be piloted to monitor its effectiveness and be reviewed after one year.
- 7.2 Miss L Wilson noted that the policy did not make reference to work patterns and enquired if this could lead to an equality challenge.
- 7.3 The Director of Business Support advised that each request would be evaluated to consider the fit between the individual and the post, other HR policies would support the process, and transfers would be based on business need and were not guaranteed.
- 7.4 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Job Transfer Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

8 HYBRID WORKING POLICY

BSC.05.09.22

- 8.1 The Director of Business Support presented the new Hybrid Working Policy, which promoted flexibility and offered employees additional workstyle choices aimed at meeting both the needs of the service and its employees. Hybrid working arrangements had been brought about by Covid, the policy would provide a formal framework within which employees may seek to split their time between the workplace and an agreed remote location. It would ensure that those working under a hybrid arrangement were treated fairly and equally to employees based in the workplace and hybrid working was carried out safely and in accordance with Libraries NI policies and current legislation.
- 8.2 Miss L Wilson commented that in principle the policy was needed and requested clarity regarding restrictions on days and times of home worked hours.
- 8.3 The Director of Business Support advised that there was an expectation that home worked hours would fit within core hours of 9am – 5pm, while there was a degree of flexibility staff needed to be contactable.
- 8.4 Miss L Wilson agreed that it was important that home working staff were contactable, and commented that core time should be more clearly detailed in the policy.
- 8.5 The Director of Business Support advised that any change to the draft policy would require further consultation with Trade Unions.

- 8.6 The Chief Executive proposed that the associated procedures be updated, this would allow the policy to be approved, without further Trade Union consultation.
- 8.7 Miss L Wilson commented that the Chief Executive's suggestion was good and practical.
- 8.8 Professor Cullen advised that he shared Miss Wilson's reservations, the comments should be noted; rather than delay implementation he would be content to proceed as proposed by the Chief Executive and review after the pilot period. He enquired if the policy created issues regarding insurance and liability.
- 8.9 The Director of Business Support reported that insurance liability had been discussed with Libraries NI's legal representatives, who were content with the Policy.
- 8.10 Councillor B Webb enquired if the policy covered the responsibilities of the employee as the home owner working from home such as restrictions on use and insurance, and if the policy would be trialled for six months.
- 8.11 The Chief Executive advised that section 6 of the association procedures dealt with insurance and potential liability issues.
- 8.12 The Director of Business Support advised that it would take six months to introduce the Policy and therefore the trial period would need to be 12 months.
- 8.13 Ms S Millar enquired how many staff would be eligible for hybrid working and were there likely to be any resource implications.
- 8.14 The Director of Business Support advised that while most libraries NI employees were engaged in direct service delivery it was estimated that approximately 100 of employees may be eligible for hybrid working arrangements.
- 8.15 Miss L Wilson requested that when the Policy is reviewed statistics, including the number of staff taking up hybrid working and work patterns, be provided to the Committee.
- 8.16 The Director of Business Support confirmed that these statistics would be made available.
- 8.17 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Hybrid Working Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

**9 INFORMATION SYSTEMS e3 PROGRAMME BSC.06.09.22
UPDATE REPORT AUGUST 2022**

9.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Information Systems e3 Programme Update Report, updating members on progress made. The e2 technical refresh had been completed, e2 contract would end on 30 September 2022. In July there had been a Gateway Review with a positive outcome. Procurement had been successfully completed and the e3 contract would begin on 01 October 2022, work on the Public Sector Shared Network (PSSN) was ongoing.

9.2 The Chief Executive commented that this was a milestone moment in the project and commended the work of e3 team including Desi Curry and Cheryl Beatty.

9.3 Councillor B Webb and Alderman T Burns endorsed the Chief Executive's comments.

9.4 Members noted the Report.

**10 HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT FOR 2021/22 BSC.07.09.22
INCLUDING PUBLIC AND EMPLOYERS LIABILITY
EXPERIENCE 2020/21**

10.1 The Assets Manager presented the Health and Safety Report, providing information on actions taken to date and summarising the number, nature, severity and impact of accidents occurring and claims experience between April 2021 and March 2022.

10.2 Councillor B Webb noted the long timeframe of some outstanding claims and enquired if there had been a delay on Libraries NI part which could lead to reputational damage.

10.3 The Assets Manager advised that there had been no delay on Libraries NI's part, it was not unusual for claims to be lodged some considerable time after alleged incidents had taken place, that EA's legal department dealt with the claims and the normal legal process was slow.

10.4 The Director of Business Support advised that Libraries NI initially defends all claims, the legal system had been slowing down in recent years and it was not unusual for claims to be in process for a number of years.

10.5 Members noted the Report.

**11 REPORT ON ASSETS MANAGEMENT AND ESTATES BSC.08.09.22
DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY 2020 TO 2022**

11.1 The Assets Manager presented the Report advising on assets management, estates development and infrastructure projects managed and delivered by the Assets Team between 2020 and 2021.

- 11.2 Professor Cullen reported that he had visited Lurgan Library, it was wonderful to see the building refurbished and modernised while retaining original features and the project was a credit to all involved. Professor Cullen enquired if the Organisation would consider drawing up an insulation improvement plan.
- 11.3 The Assets Manager reported that this was being considered as part of the overall approach to energy and environmental management and that a holistic view needed to be taken as retrofitting insulation could impact ventilation in old buildings.
- 11.4 The Director of Business Support reported that the Assets Team were focused on energy efficiency and reducing carbon, although constrained by resourcing. They had secured £160,000 for LED lighting and solar panels and recently completed feasibility studies for a zero carbon library.
- 11.5 Members noted the Report.

12 REPORT ON PROCUREMENT ACTIVITY 2021/22 BSC.09.09.22

- 12.1 The Finance Manager presented the Report, providing an overview and analysis of the procurement activity undertaken throughout 2021/22 and of the sources of goods and services including IT equipment and services, and major and minor works.
- 12.2 Members noted the Report.

13 STATUTORY EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 BSC.10.09.22

- 13.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report, which was based on a template provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. It detailed the progress made in 2021/22 in implementing the Libraries NI Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plan. The report highlighted equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice and progress on Equality Scheme commitments
- 13.2 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2021/22 was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

14 FINANCE REPORTS

14.1 RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO AUGUST 2022 BSC.11.09.22

- 14.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure Report to August 2022 detailing expenditure incurred to date and projecting a

£1,400,000 overspend. Pay negotiations were continuing, the current proposal was for a fixed amount increase to all staff rather than a percentage increase.

14.3 The Director of Business Support advised that the stock budget remained at £500,000 which was significantly below what was need to stock libraries and was being eroded by normal spend.

14.4 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the impact on staff costs in percentage terms if the proposed pay negotiations were agreed,

14.5 The Director of Business Support advised that while the current pay offer would impacts staff at various grades differently on average it represented an increase of between 5% - 6.5% and reminded Members pay negotiations were subject to consultation and the related financial information was subject to confidentiality.

14.6 Members noted the Report.

14.7 Professor Cullen reported that there was a competition for councillor Board Members closing on 03 October 2022, to date there was only one applicant, a reminder would be issued and councillor members were requested to encourage colleagues to apply for board membership.

14.8 The Chairperson advised that he was happy to encourage councillors to apply.

14.9 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO AUGUST 2022 BSC.12.09.22

14.10 The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report to August 2022.

14.11 Members noted the Report.

15 PROCUREMENT REPORT – TENDERS OVER £1,000 AND SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000 BSC.13.09.22

15.1 The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report updating the Committee of procurement activity over £1,000 and Single Tender Actions for the period from 14 May 2022 to 9 September 2022.

15.2 Members noted the Report.

16 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO AUGUST 2022 BSC.14.09.22

16.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Sickness Absence Report for the 12 month period up to August 2022 advising that the composite sickness absence level for August was 11.54 FTE days, the target for 2022/23 being 9.5 FTE days or less... At the time of reporting five staff

members were suffering from long Covid, while the overall impacts of Covid were lessening.

16.2 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding limits on the length of long term absence, noted that the report suggested 103 staff were long term absent and emphasised the need for appropriate pro-activity.

16.3 The Director of Business Support advised that the rolling year format of the report could be misleading and that for August 31 staff were long term sick. Long term absences can be for a considerable period of time, absence management procedures were applied and Occupational Health would be involved. Each person was dealt with on a case by case basis. There was no set cut off point and long term sickness could continue for some time. The HR Team were pro-active, referring to Occupational Health, organising fitness to work assessments, the first point of contact for staff was their manager.

16.4 Members noted the Report.

17 2021/22 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS (DRAFT) BSC.15.09.22

17.1 The Director of Business Support presented the draft 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts for the Committee's information, advised that they would be brought to ARAC in October and subsequently to the Board.

17.2 Member noted the most recent draft of 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts.

18 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL BSC.16.09.22

18.1 The Assets Manager presented the Report on the Use of the Common Seal, detailing the one occasion on which the Common Seal of the Northern Ireland Library Authority had been applied in the period between May 2022 and September 2022.

18.2 Members noted the Report.

19 REPORT ON OUTCOME OF THE PROCUREMENT OF A PARTIAL DESIGN TEAM FOR THE LED LIGHTING AND PV PANELS TO VARIOUS LIBRARIES BSC.17.09.22

19.1 The Assets Manager presented the Report on Outcome of the Procurement of a Partial Design Team for the Led Lighting and PV Panels to Various Libraries; Libraries NI had successfully bid for funding from the Invest to Save Fund and where seeking to appoint a consultant to take this project forward.

19.2 Members noted the Report.

20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

20.1 There was no other notified business.

21 DATE OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

21.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 24 November 2022 at 10:30am.

22 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

22.1 The meeting ended at 12:20pm

22.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the following exceptions:-

- Mr T Neeson joined at 10:45am
- Councillor C Brownlee joined at 11:48am
- Professor B Cullen left at 12noon

Signed:



Dated:

24 : 11 - 2022