

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held remotely via Zoom
on Thursday 16 November 2023 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Professor Bernard Cullen
Councillor Julie Gilmour
Councillor Andrew McAuley Vice-Chairperson

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 Marie Gavin	Area Manager
Ms Finola Guinnane	Boardroom Apprentice
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

The Vice-Chairperson, Councillor A McAuley, chaired the meeting in the absence of the Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular he welcomed Marie Gavin, Area Manager, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Mr J Peto.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Vice-Chairperson 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

3.1 There was no Chairperson's business.

4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

SC.01.11.23

- 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 continuation of reduced opening hours, ad hoc closures in libraries and customer feedback received on both. Ms A Adair informed Members of the Christmas and New Year closure schedule and the impact of recent flooding in Downpatrick and Newry City libraries.
- 4.2 The Director of Library Services reported that the newly reimagined space at Whiterock Library as a dedicated children's library would be officially launched by the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People on 8 December 2023 and that invitations would be issued shortly. She also reported on the Commissioner's recent launch of the 'For Every Child Every Right' exhibition in Derry Central Library where he also delivered workshops with primary and post primary children on hopes and aspirations for their futures in Northern Ireland. It was noted that the exhibition will tour 11 libraries with the Commissioner delivering the hopes and aspirations workshop in each location over the coming year.
- 4.3 Ms A Adair highlighted the recent successful celebrations for the 135th anniversary of Belfast Central Library with an excellent programme of events that were well attended by stakeholders and local dignitaries including the Lord Mayor of Belfast who expressed an interest in revisiting Belfast Central Library.
- 4.4 The Director of Library Services drew attention to Book Week NI and the successful week of events and initiatives held including a visit by the Secretary of State to Lisburn City Library on Love your Library Day. She confirmed that a full evaluation would be brought to Services Committee at a later date.
- 4.5 Ms A Adair reported that this year 37 libraries participated in the annual World's Biggest Coffee Morning raising over £6,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support.
- 4.6 The Director of Library Services informed Members that a launch event for Get Online Week took place in Ormeau Road Library on 11 October 2023 with Jayne Brady, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Libraries NI participated in Get Online Week with 57 Go On events delivered across the library network together with a number of events in partnership with the Department of Finance Go On Team.
- 4.7 Ms A Adair highlighted the upcoming launch of Replay, a new video streaming platform from the British Film Institute (BFI) designed to give access to thousands of newly digitised 20 century programmes and videos through public libraries in the UK. The Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, will launch Replay in the Con Auld Gallery, Holywood Library on 22 November.

- 4.8 The Director of Library Services then went on to highlight the launch of the 32nd season of Tullycarnet Yarnspinners on 21 September. Colm Sands engaged the 60 strong audience with brilliant stories and Roger Armstrong, funder of the Armstrong Storytelling Trust was present. She also drew attention to other Yarnspinning events that were held in Bangor Carnegie, Cushendall, Holywood and Lisburn City libraries.
- 4.9 The Director of Library Services reported on ‘greening our libraries’ highlighting the new Seed Library Club in partnership with Garvagh and District Development Association and Social Farms and Gardens. She also referred to refurbishments in Ballymoney, Bessbrook and Killyleagh libraries to achieve low carbon energy consumption through a funding allocation from the Department for the Economy Invest to Save project.
- 4.10 The Director of Library Services drew attention to the following recent events and initiatives:
- Make the Call Information Sessions
 - World Mental Health Day
 - Positive Ageing Month
 - the African Drum Circle and Storyteller
 - Ballysally Integrated Nurturing Project
 - Harry Potter Day
 - Online Yoga and Chi Mi Sessions
 - Winter Warmer Roadshows.
- 4.11 The Director of Library Services then drew Member’s attention to the variety of forthcoming events planned until the end of December and encouraged Members to attend where possible. She also drew attention to the upcoming Department for Communities Well Champion event at which Kim Keys, Deputy Head of Service, will give a presentation to showcase Libraries NI’s service offers that address positive wellbeing.
- 4.12 Ms A Adair informed the Committee that she had been invited to participate in the successful revalidation of the PgDip/MSc in Library and Information Management course at Ulster University in October and also highlighted Libraries NI’s participation in the following meetings:
- Deafblind Futures Forum, 28 September 2023
 - Libraries Connected, Open Access Libraries, 3 October 2023
 - Department of Education, 12 October 2023.
- 4.13 The Director of Library Services reported on a number of recent library visits. Margaret Bell, Head of Service, welcomed Councillor J Gilmour, Vice-Chairperson of the Board, Anthony O’Neill and Fionnuala Elliott (DfC) to visit Enniskillen and Lisnaskea libraries, an opportunity for all to see the poor condition of Enniskillen Library emphasising the urgent need for a new library facility for the county and to demonstrate the impact of a new library within a small community.

Ms A Adair welcomed Board Member, Councillor M McRandall, to Hollywood Library to meet with a number of managers and hear about library services in the area. She informed Members that the opportunity was open to all Board Members and to contact her if they wished to arrange a library visit.

- 4.14 The Vice-Chairperson thanked the Director of Library Services for a very informative report.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2023 SC.02.11.23

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Professor B Cullen, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 21 September 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 12 October 2023.

6. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 The Director of Library Services confirmed that following the meeting that outlined the role of Strategic Communications and Marketing in Libraries NI, a further meeting has been scheduled for 13 December at 2:00pm to consider digital branding.

7. REVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PLANNING SC.03.11.23

- 7.1 Mr S Beattie reported that as a community planning statutory partner Libraries NI is required to report to the Permanent Secretaries Group (PSG) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Engagement Forum on its contribution to Community Planning. He outlined both common themes and variations in community plans across the 11 Council areas highlighting how Libraries NI contributes and the evidence base being gathered.

- 7.2 The Head of Service gave examples of Libraries NI's core programmes demonstrating how each supports community plans and highlighting the themes they address. He went on to inform the Committee of the Loneliness Champion award that was awarded to Catherine Kane, District Officer for the Mid Ulster Council area. This well-deserved recognition was as a result of Catherine's remarkable efforts in contributing to the Mid-Ulster Loneliness Network, a sub-group of the Mid Ulster Community Planning Partnership. He reported that one of Catherine's most notable achievements has been the establishment of three Chatty Libraries in Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt libraries.

- 7.3 Mr S Beattie reported on progress in developing two strategic presentations to deliver at Community Planning Strategic Partnership meetings, Libraries NI Contribution to Community Planning and the Benefits of Reading.

7.4 Services Committee noted the Review of Engagement and Participation in Community Planning and thanked Mr S Beattie for the comprehensive report.

8. OFFICIAL STATISTICS **SC.04.11.23**

8.1 The Director of Library Services drew attention to Libraries NI: Statistical Bulletin, Participation in Core Library Activities in Northern Ireland 2022/23 that had been circulated, noting that this was the seventh year in which official statistics have been published.

8.2 The Director of Library Services highlighted that there are no participation statistics for 2018/19 to 2021/22 as a consequence of incomplete data returns for various reasons (including the closure of libraries/limited availability of services during the COVID-19 pandemic) so comparison of 2022/23 participation statistics with these years is therefore not possible. She also highlighted that as a result of the introduction of data collection on library activities not previously reported on and changes to definitions of existing activities for 2022/23, it is not appropriate to directly compare 2022/23 overall participation statistics with earlier years. It was noted that comparisons are made on a like-for-like basis with the most recently published statistics, 2017/18.

8.3 Ms A Adair gave an overview of Libraries NI's core activities and noted that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of new public health regulations, guidance and advice may have fundamentally changed peoples' behaviour and attitude with regard to visiting libraries and that this trend is not peculiar to Northern Ireland.

8.4 A discussion followed and the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, highlighted the importance of gathering qualitative evidence on the impact of core activities for customers and Libraries NI's ability to assist in delivering on the agenda for other government bodies.

8.5 Services Committee noted the Official Statistics 2022/23 and commended staff in maintaining a high level of service.

9. SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS REPORT AND RISK REGISTER: SEPTEMBER 2023 **SC.05.11.23**

9.1 Mr S Beattie introduced the Services Risk Register highlighting an increase in the Customer Expectations and Resources risks, mainly as a result of currently operating within an insufficient budget allocation and consequently the inability to purchase book stock to date this year.

- 9.2 The Head of Service then presented the Service Plan Progress Report 2022/23 which demonstrates progress on achieving targets as at 30 September 2023. He highlighted the growth of eBook and eNewspaper loans and drew attention to initiatives such as Big Summer Read, Book Week NI and Book of the Month and the positive impact of such promotions on participation. It was noted that four adult titles that were promoted by the Collections Team as Book of the Month featured in the top ten of the most book borrowed book list. The remainder of the books that featured in the top ten were children's books which was in line with children's loans and active membership being notably higher than adult use.
- 9.3 The Services Committee noted the Service Plan Progress Report and Risk Register.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 10.1 The Chairperson referred to the recent incident of flooding that affected Downpatrick and Newry City libraries. The Director of Library Services agreed to liaise with the Head of Assets on protection against flooding in the future.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would take place on Thursday 18 January 2024 at 10:30am and was due to be held remotely.

12. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 12.1 The meeting ended at 11:43am.
- 12.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.