

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held on Thursday 3 July 2025 at
10:30 am in Lisburn City Library

PRESENT

(IP) Ms Bonnie Anley
(IP) Councillor Gareth Sharvin

Chairperson
Vice-Chairperson

(IP) Councillor Alistair Cathcart
(IP) Mr Adrian Driscoll
(IP) Councillor Rosie Kinnear
(IP) Councillor Roisin Lynch
(VL) Councillor Andrew McAuley
(IP) Ms Ursula O'Hare
(IP) Ms Wendy Osborne OBE
(IP) Miss Linda Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

(IP) Mr Jim O'Hagan
(IP) Mr Desi Miskelly
(IP) Ms Adrienne Adair
(IP) Mrs Leona Kerr

Chief Executive
Director of Business Support
Director of Library Services
Head of Internal Audit

Note: IP denotes 'in-person' attendance, VL denotes 'virtual' attendance.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Councillor Julie Gilmour
Councillor Martin McRandal
Mr John Peto

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 L Kerr to her first meeting of the Libraries NI Board. Ms Kerr has recently taken up the post as Head of Internal Audit and the Chairperson noted Ms Kerr will give a presentation to Members, later at the meeting, on the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) and the Board's responsibilities for the oversight of Internal Audit.
- 3.2 The Chairperson thanked Members for returning their appraisal documentation promptly confirming that this process was now complete for 2024/25.
- 3.3 Members were informed that the Chairperson and Chief Executive would attend a meeting with the DfC Minister, Mr G Lyons on 23 July 2025 to brief him on the Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2025 – 30. It was also noted that the DfC Minister was scheduled to visit Banbridge Library on Thursday 17 July 2025.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD LNI 01.07.25

- 4.1 Members were reminded that the current Vice-Chairperson of the Libraries NI Board, Councillor J Gilmour had been appointed for a two-year period at a meeting of the Board held on 8 July 2021. That period was extended by resolution of the Board for another year at the Board Meeting held on 6 July 2023 and due to the term of appointment for some Board Members ending and new Members being appointed during 2024 her tenure as Vice-Chairperson was further extended for another year at the Board Meeting held on 27 June 2024. Members noted that the normal convention is that the Vice-Chairperson of the Board is drawn from the Councillor Board Members and that the term of office would normally be for a period of two years.
- 4.2 At the Board Meeting held on 17 April 2025 the Chairperson had asked for expressions of interest for the position of Vice-Chairperson of the Board to be sent to either herself or the Chief Executive. She confirmed that Councillor G Sharvin had indicated that he would be willing to take on the role of Vice-Chairperson, and there being no further nominations, on a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor A Cathcart the Chairperson declared that Councillor G Sharvin had been elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Libraries NI Board for a period of two years until July 2027.
- 4.3 Members congratulated Councillor Sharvin on his appointment.
- 4.4 On behalf of Members the Chairperson thanked Councillor J Gilmour for her service as Vice-Chairperson of the Libraries NI Board for the past four years adding that Councillor Gilmour had been a tremendous support to her.

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

5.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the papers which had been circulated, drawing attention in particular to the undernoted items:

- Confirmation of Budget Allocation 2025/26
- Downpatrick Library
- Summer Opening Hours
- Free Period Products Project
- Big Summer Read 2025
- Belfast Central Library – Strategic Insight Lite Lab
- Partnership Agreement – Light Touch Review
- Assembly Questions

5.2 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mrs W Osborne the Board agreed to go into Committee.

5.3 The Chairperson reported that while in Committee the Chief Executive had briefed the Board on a matter relating to an opportunity for joint working and a capital development proposal.

5.4 Members noted the report.

6. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE 26 JUNE 2025 (IN COMMITTEE)

6.1 Staff withdrew from the meeting and the Chairperson reminded Members that the meeting was still in Committee.

6.2 She reported that while in Committee, she had provided an update on the meeting of the Remuneration Committee, which had taken place on 26 June 2025 in relation to the review and approval of performance and remuneration of the Senior Management Team.

6.3 On a proposal by Mr A Driscoll seconded by Councillor R Lynch, Members agreed to come out of Committee.

6.4 Staff rejoined the meeting.

7. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 17 APRIL 2025 LNI 02.07.25

7.1 On a proposal by Councillor G Sharvin, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 17 April 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 17 APRIL 2025
LNI 03.07.25

- 8.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting that all items had been completed as follows:

Management Report

- 8.2 Item 8.5: Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025) and Item 8.8: Annual Board Assurance Statement 2024/25

The Chief Executive confirmed that the signed Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2025 and the Annual Board Assurance Statement 2024/25 had been forwarded to DfC on 17 April 2025.

Item 11.3: Libraries NI Annual Business Plan 2025/26 Draft

- 8.3 The draft Libraries NI Annual Business Plan 2025/26 has been updated to take account of the full year indicative funding allocation and will be discussed further at Agenda Item 15.

9. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 APRIL 2025
LNI 04.07.25

- 9.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, presented the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 16 April 2025. She reminded Members that at the Board Meeting held on 17 April 2025 an oral report on the Committee meeting had been provided and the Board had approved the following:

- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2025
- Annual Board Assurance Statement 2024/25
- Corporate Risk Register as at March 2025
- Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2025/26

- 9.2 On a proposal by Councillor A Cathcart seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 16 April 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting. It was noted that no additional items arising from this meeting required Board approval.

10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JUNE 2025
LNI 05.07.25

- 10.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025.

- 10.2 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Ms U O'Hare, the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 18 June 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

- 10.3 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Councillor G Sharvin, the Board approved and adopted the Internal Audit Charter (Annual Review).
- 10.4 On a proposal by Councillor A Cathcart, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Anti-Fraud Policy (Reviewed).
- 10.5 On a proposal by Councillor A Cathcart, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Fraud Response Plan (Reviewed)
- 10.6 It was noted that the Libraries NI Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 and the Corporate Risk Register would be discussed at Agenda Items 11 and 12 respectively.

11. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2024/25 LNI 06.07.25

- 11.1 The Chief Executive presented the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 which sets out in detail information on Libraries NI's activity and work during the year.
- 11.2 He reported that the document would remain in draft until the completion of the external audit, noting that the annual accounts will be submitted to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) prior to commencement of the audit which is scheduled to begin on 26 August 2025. He confirmed that the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 18 June 2025.
- 11.3 Members noted that it was anticipated that the audit of the annual accounts would be completed over the summer and prior to certification by the NIAO the final audited Annual Report and Accounts would be brought to the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to be held on 15 October 2025 and then to the Board for approval on 16 October 2025.
- 11.4 The Board noted and accepted the recommendation from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee that the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 be submitted to the NIAO for audit.
- 11.5 Members noted the report.

12. MANAGEMENT REPORT LNI 07.07.25

- 12.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support briefed the Board on the Management Report.
- 12.2 Key Performance Indicators 2024/25: End of Year Report LNI 07.07.25 (i)
The Chief Executive drew attention to the end of year report for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2024/25 and reported that in line with the end of year report for the Business Plan 2024/25 the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status for the targets against loans and renewals and e-loans currently

reflecting 'red' would be amended to 'amber' as the target set had been narrowly missed.

12.3 Members noted the report.

12.4 Libraries NI Business Plan 2024/25: End of Year Report LNI 07.07.25 (ii)
The Chief Executive explained that the Libraries NI Business Plan 2024/25 had included some 52 separate objectives and targets, including sub-targets. The end of year report showed that 38 of the targets in the Business Plan were achieved in full, with a further seven partially achieved and seven recorded as not achieved. The Chief Executive drew attention to the targets which had not been achieved providing additional information.

12.5 Finance Report: May 2025 LNI 07.07.25 (iii)
The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to May 2025. He reminded Members that the 2025/26 financial year had commenced with an interim three month funding allocation and that the formal confirmation of annual resource and capital budget allocations although received on 19 May 2025, had been embargoed until the end of May 2025.

12.6 He confirmed that as of 31 May 2025, the overall expenditure position combined with projections to the end of the financial year suggested a minimal potential underspend in the total resource allocation of some £40,617 (0.1%). Monitoring and adjustment of internal budget allocations would continue with a view to reducing or eliminating this variance.

12.7 He also confirmed that as of 31 May 2025, the overall capital expenditure position combined with projections to the end of the financial year suggested a potential variance in expenditure against the present allocation of some £370,000 (21%) largely arising from the delays in securing approval for the Newtownards Library project and in reinstating the Enniskillen project. It was expected that this variance would be addressed through the easement/pressure bid process with DfC and that contingency projects would be brought forward.

12.8 The Director of Business Support informed Members that bids had been submitted to the June Monitoring round for stock funding and against general capital pressures.

12.9 Members discussed the pressures around capital funding and in particular the impacts of the necessary replacement of passenger lifts at Belfast Central Library on the overall capital Health and Safety programme. The Director of Business Support provided reassurance that he was not aware of any other health and safety requirements which were reprioritised as a result of the expenditure in Belfast Central Library and confirmed if any issues were to arise that the Board would be informed.

Corporate Risk Register

LNI 07.07.25 (iv)

- 12.10 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 18 June 2025, noting that there had been no significant change since it was last seen by Members at the April meeting of the Board. As previously noted the 2025/26 financial year had commenced with an interim three month funding allocation. On 19 May 2025 Libraries NI had been informed of an indicative full year allocation but as this information had been embargoed and the announcement further delayed until the end of May, the review of the Corporate Risk Register had been carried out on the basis that a sufficient allocation would be received to enable a comprehensive public library service to be delivered. He confirmed that the Corporate Risk Register reflected that a smooth transition had taken place moving from one financial year to another and currently showed a relatively stable position.
- 12.11 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor R Lynch the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at May 2025 and noted the Management Report.

13. FUNDING ALLOCATIONS (RESOURCE/CAPITAL) AND PROPOSED BUDGET AND SPENDING PLAN 2025/26

LNI 08.07.25

- 13.1 The Director of Business Support referred to his previous report at paragraph 12.4 regarding the interim financial allocation for 2025/26. He informed Members that the Northern Ireland Executive had considered and set the NI Budget 2025/26 on 3 April 2025 and subsequently on 13 May 2025 notification had been received from DfC of agreement on indicative full year allocations. Allocations remained indicative pending the outcome of the department's Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the initial 2025/26 allocation decisions which runs to 7 August 2025.
- 13.2 He explained that subject to the conclusion of the EQIA exercise and any subsequent adjustment to funding outcomes, the Libraries NI indicative Opening Budget Allocations for 2025/26 were at present £34,017,000 (resource) and £1,759,000 (capital). This represents an increase of some £2,828,000 from the 2024/25 opening resource allocation while capital allocations were provided on a project specific basis.
- 13.3 Members noted that earlier confirmation of the annual resource allocation, although indicative, was welcomed and the increase in baseline funding from the previous year continued to reflect the work undertaken by DfC and Libraries NI to establish realistic, stable, and sustainable levels of funding for the public library service.
- 13.4 The Director of Business Support drew attention to the Proposed Budget/Spending Plan which had been prepared based on the notified indicative opening budget allocation for resource and capital and which provides detail of the planning assumptions and the proposed spending profile

required for the organisation to continue to deliver core services while remaining within the current indicative resource allocation envelope.

- 13.5 Following discussion and on a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor R Lynch the Board noted the indicative capital allocation 2025/26 and that progress on delivering the identified projects will be reported through the usual Committee/Board channels. In respect of Resource allocation the Board also considered the information provided and approved and adopted the Budget/Spending Plan for 2025/26 as a framework within which expenditure will be monitored and controlled.

14. LIBRARIES NI CORPORATE PLAN 2025 – 30 LNI 09.07.25

- 14.1 The Chief Executive reminded Members that a draft of the Corporate Plan had been presented at the Board Meeting held on 17 April 2025. At that meeting it was agreed that a working group consisting of some Board Members and staff involved in the Corporate Plan Working Group would meet for a final review of the Plan before it was brought to the July Board Meeting for approval. This review had taken place on 22 May 2025.
- 14.2 He reminded Members that a meeting had been arranged with the DfC Minister on 23 July to provide a briefing on the Corporate Plan 2025 - 30 and confirmed it was hoped to hold a launch event in the Autumn.
- 14.3 On behalf of Members, the Chairperson thanked the Working Group for their work on the Plan and in particular thanked the Head of Marketing and Communications, Mr G Beattie for taking on board feedback from Members.
- 14.4 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved the Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2025 – 30 noting that a copy of the Plan will be submitted to the DfC Minister for departmental approval with the intention of holding a launch event later in the year.

15. REVISED DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2025/26 LNI 10.07.25

- 15.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the draft Annual Business Plan 2025/26 which had been presented to Members at the Board Meeting held on 17 April 2025. At that stage due to the absence of a full year financial allocation it had not been possible to finalise the draft plan. The financial allocation has now been received and the draft Annual Business Plan 2025/26 has been updated to take account of the allocation.
- 15.2 Miss L Wilson drew attention to Section 8 of the Business Plan targets and enquired if reference should be included to Investors in People (IIP). The Chief Executive confirmed that he would liaise with the Head of Human Resources and if appropriate, he would include wording regarding the completion of the IIP baseline survey.

- 15.3 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor R Lynch and subject to the amendments at paragraphs 15.2 and 15.3 above, the Board approved the draft Annual Business Plan 2025/26 and agreed for its formal submission to DfC for departmental approval.

16. EXTERNAL BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW LNI 11.07.25

- 16.1 The Chief Executive reminded Members that the Partnership Agreement requires the Board to undertake an externally facilitated review of Board Effectiveness at least once every three years. This review will consider the performance of the Board, its Committees and individual Board Members.
- 16.2 He explained that the Chairperson has liaised with the Department who is content for Libraries NI to determine its own approach to an externally facilitated review and have indicated the review can be a peer review as it is a cost effective option.
- 16.3 He reported that the Board will undertake its own assessment and detailed the evidence which will form the basis of the evaluation. He added that the Reviewer may wish to seek additional information e.g. through interviews with Board Members.
- 16.4 On a proposal by Councillor G Sharvin, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Board agreed and approved the approach and methodology for the planned external review of Board Effectiveness. The Board gave its approval for the Chief Executive to initiate the process which will include the preparation of the evidence pack and also to seek to identify a suitably skilled external facilitator.

17. GLOBAL INTERNAL AUDIT STANDARDS – PRESENTATION

- 17.1 Members agreed that this item should be deferred and taken at a later stage in the meeting.
- 17.2 Mrs L Kerr, Head of Internal Audit gave a presentation to Members on the Global Internal Audit Standards immediately following Any Other Business.
- 17.3 She informed the Board of its responsibilities in relation to the internal audit function in line with the Global Internal Audit Standards effective from 1 April 2025, as outlined in Principles 6 to 8. These responsibilities included authorising and supporting the internal audit mandate, ensuring the function is positioned independently within the organisation, and providing effective oversight to maintain audit quality and relevance. It was noted that these duties may be delegated to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, in line with the Standards, to ensure focused governance and oversight.
- 17.4 She also highlighted that Global Internal Audit Standards included guidance for small internal audit functions, applicable to Libraries NI, and potential challenges and adaptations that may need to be considered.

17.5. Members thanked the Head of Internal Audit for the presentation.

18. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 MAY 2025
LNI 12.07.25

18.1 In the absence of the Committee Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor A McAuley presented the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025.

18.2 On a proposal by Councillor R Kinnear, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 15 May 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting. There were no items considered for which the Committee was required to make specific recommendations on or to seek approval of the Board.

19. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON
29 MAY 2025
LNI 13.07.25

19.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Miss L Wilson, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2025.

19.2 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Ms U O'Hare, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 29 May 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

19.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley seconded by Ms U O'Hare, the Board approved and adopted the Domestic Sexual Violence and Abuse Policy.

19.4 On a proposal by Ms U O'Hare, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Smoke Free Workplace (Review).

19.5 On a proposal by Ms U O'Hare, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Menopause Policy (Review).

19.6 On a proposal by Ms U O'Hare, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Procurement Policy (Review).

19.7 On a proposal by Ms U O'Hare, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Business Support Service Plan 2025/26.

19.8 On a proposal by Ms U O'Hare, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Business Support Risk Register 2025/26.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 20.1 On behalf of Members the Chairperson thanked Mrs M Anderson, the former Head of Internal Audit who retired on 30 June 2025 for her service to Libraries NI and wished her well in her retirement.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

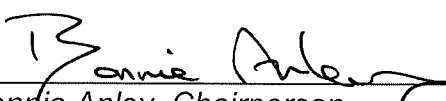
- 21.1 Members noted that the Board Planning Day would take place at 10.30 am in Hollywood Library on Thursday 11 September 2025.
- 21.2 It was agreed that the Chief Executive would prepare a draft itinerary for the Board Planning Day, agree it with the Chairperson and circulate to Members for information.

22. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 22.1 The meeting ended at 1:32 pm.
- 22.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Mr A Driscoll left the meeting at 12:39 pm
Ms U O'Hare left the meeting at 1:21 pm

Signed:


Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date:

16-10-25