

## **LIBRARIES NI**

### **The Northern Ireland Library Authority**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 31 March 2022 at 10:30am via Video Link

#### **PRESENT**

Alderman Thomas Burns Vice Chairperson  
Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP  
Councillor Cheryl Brownlee  
Miss Linda Wilson

Ms Angela Hodkinson Boardroom Apprentice

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr Jim O'Hagan Chief Executive  
Mr Desi Miskelly Director of Business Support  
Mr Tim Neeson Assets Manager  
Ms Rita McNamee Finance Manager  
Mr Desi Curry Head of ICU/ICT  
Ms Jacqui McKinstry Head of Human Resources

#### **OBSERVERS**

Ms Jillian McFrederick District Manager  
Mr Edwin Johnston District Manager  
Mr Michael Fry District Manager

#### **1 APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE**

Mr Neil Bodger Chairperson  
Professor Bernard Cullen Chairperson of the Board

In the absence of the Chairperson the meeting was chaired by Alderman Thomas Burns, Vice Chairperson.

#### **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 Managers Jillian McFrederick, Edwin Johnston and Michael Fry.

**4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS BSC.01.03.22**

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support reported that as yet no financial allocation for 2022/23 had been received and that in the absence of a budget setting mechanism at Executive/Departmental level it was likely Libraries NI would begin the new financial year operating under contingency arrangements and a constrained financial position. The situation had been discussed with the DfC Finance Director and authority to continue spending had been sought.
- 4.2 The Chairperson commented that while the situation was beyond Libraries NI's control it was far from satisfactory, and made it difficult to plan.
- 4.3 The Director of Business Support advised that Neil Bodger had made it known that he would be taking up a position on the DfC Management Board and due to the potential conflict of interest this created he would be resigning from the Libraries NI Board effective from 31 March 2022.
- 4.4 The acting Chairperson asked that the committee's thanks to Neil Bodger for his contribution to Libraries NI be recorded and wished him all best in his new position.
- 4.5 The Director of Business Support advised that this resignation created a further vacancy in the Business Support Committee and Board membership and proposed asking the Board to review membership of the Committee and consider nominating replacements for Neil Bodger and Garath Keating. Subsequently at the May 2022 meeting the Committee would consider the election of a new chairperson, applying rotation through elected and non-elected members.
- 4.6 The Director of Business Support thanked Alderman Thomas Burns for stepping in to chair the meeting.

**5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2022 BSC.02.03.22**

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee on 27 January 2022, which had been submitted to the Board on 10 February 2022, were approved.

**6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 27 JANUARY 2022 BSC.03.031.22**

- 6.1 The Director of Business Support reported that the Committee/Board Effectiveness Review 2021/22 had been completed a copy of the committee's response to the Board was attached to the minutes of the January Business Support Committee meeting minutes.

**7 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY REVIEW BSC.04.03.22**

- 7.1 The Head of ICU/ICT presented the reviewed Freedom of Information Policy, no changes were proposed, and the policy was considered to remain fit for purpose.
- 7.2 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Freedom of Information Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 7.3 Councillor B Webb enquired if it would be possible when a policy was reviewed and did not need amendments that members be issued an explanatory note, rather than a complete policy document.
- 7.4 The Chief Executive advised that this would be considered and if possible in future a cover sheet summarising the policy and any revisions would be provided along with a link to the policy document.

**8 SMOKEFREE WORKPLACE POLICY REVIEW BSC.05.03.22**

- 8.1 The Assets Manager presented the reviewed Smokefree Workplace Policy, advising that no substantive changes were proposed and the policy was considered to remain fit for purpose.
- 8.2 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Councillor C Brownlee, the Smokefree Workplace Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

**9 PROCUREMENT POLICY REVIEW BSC.06.03.22**

- 9.1 The Finance Manager presented the reviewed Procurement Policy, advising that no significant changes had been made, only minor amendments had been required to update terminology and references to guidance documents.
- 9.2 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Alderman T Burns the Procurement Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

**10 INFORMATION SYSTEMS e3 PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT MARCH 2022 BSC.07.03.22**

- 10.1 The Head of ICU/ICT presented the Information Systems e3 Programme Update Report. Updating members on progress of procurement activity relating to the e3 programme. The programme remained on target for submission of the FBC in early May 2022.
- 10.2 Members noted the Report.
- 10.3 The Chairperson commented that it was great to see this tremendous task progressing so well.

## **11 FINANCE REPORTS**

### **11.1 RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO FEBRUARY 2022** **BSC.08.03.22**

11.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure Report to February 2022 detailing the expenditure incurred to date and projected year end position.

11.3 Alderman T Burns enquired if it was possible to budget for the current substantial increase in the cost of utilities.

11.4 The Finance Manager advised that while it was extremely challenging at the moment to accurately project cost trends, a cautious approach was adopted and sufficient contingency was built into budgets to accommodate unexpected increases.

### **11.5 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO FEBRUARY 2022** **BSC.09.03.22**

11.6 The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report to February 2022. It was noted that while the majority of capital projects were delivered or on course for delivery that some planned expenditure had been impacted by supply chain issues and the availability of materials.

11.7 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the percentage underspend allowed by DfC.

11.8 The Finance Manager advised that the permitted variance for underspend was  $\leq 1\%$ .

11.9 Members noted the Reports.

### **12 PROCUREMENT REPORT –TENDERS OVER £1,000 & SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000** **BSC.10.03.22**

12.1 The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report.

12.2 Members noted the Report.

### **13 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO FEBRUARY 2022** **BSC.11.03.22**

13.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report, advising that the 2021/22 target of maintaining sickness absence levels at or below 9.50 FTE days was not being achieved with the February rate being 10.01 FTE days. The targets for short term, medium and zero absences had been achieved, however a rise in long term absences had impacted the overall rate. Managers were working hard to provide supportive and preventative measures.

13.2 Ms A Hodkinson enquired if Libraries NI had a Menopause Policy in place.

- 13.3 The Head of Human Resources confirmed that a Menopause Policy had been approved and implemented in November 2021.
- 13.4 Miss L Wilson enquired if there was a link between staff declaring themselves absent due to Covid rather than another illness which would impact their sickness absence record.
- 13.5 The Head of Human Resources confirmed that absence due to Covid was not included in sickness statistics, that reporting of Covid was monitored and staff absence trends relating to Covid broadly correlated with societal trends. Potential false declarations of Covid were also monitored for and staff were asked to complete a declaration to confirm their absence was due to Covid.
- 13.6 Members noted the Report.

## **14 TENDER REPORTS**

<b>Belfast Central Library Structure Repairs</b>	<b>BSC.12.03.22</b>
<b>Keady Library – Heating and Electrical Refurbishment</b>	<b>BSC.13.03.22</b>
<b>Limavady Library - Mechanical Upgrading and Legionella Safety Measures (various locations)</b>	<b>BSC.14.03.22</b>
<b>Portrush Library Refurbishment</b>	<b>BSC.15.03.22</b>
<b>Downpatrick and Warrenpoint Libraries Mechanical and Electrical Refurbishment</b>	<b>BSC.16.03.22</b>
<b>Dundonald, Falls Road and Tullycarnet Libraries Minor Works</b>	<b>BSC.17.03.22</b>

- 14.1 The Assets Manager presented a number of Tender Reports detailing the outcomes of procurement activity relating to various estates and property maintenance projects.
- 14.2 Alderman T Burns commented that it was good to see work continuing to maintain and improve the Libraries NI's buildings and enquired regarding the impact of substantial increases in the cost of materials.
- 14.3 The Director of Business Support advised that there as these were largely capitally funded projects there was some flexibility to work with DfC to accommodate increases in costs.
- 14.4 Members noted the Reports

## **15 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

- 15.1 There was no other notified business.

## **16 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

- 16.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 26 May 2022 at 10:30am

## 17 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

17.1 The meeting ended at 11:30am.

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

Signed



Dated

26 May 2022

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***During the current Covid-19 pandemic and with remote working in place, these minutes, which were approved at the Business Support Committee Meeting held on 26 May 2022, are published with an e-signature***