

## **LIBRARIES NI**

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

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 28 November 2024 at 10:30am

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

VL – Attendance via video link

IP – Attendance in person

#### **PRESENT**

Miss Linda Wilson (IP)	Chairperson
Councillor Martin McRandal (VL)	
Wendy Osborne (IP)	
Councillor Roisin Lynch (VL)	

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

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

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson of Libraries NI Board and Ms Ursula O'Hare.

#### **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 welcomed Councillor Roisin Lynch and Ms Ursula O'Hare as new members of the Committee.

- 3.2 Councillor Roisin Lynch thanked the Chair and advised that she may need to leave the meeting at 11:30am.

#### **4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS**

**BSC.01.11.24**

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support reported that the 2023/24 Annual Report and Accounts had been formally certified, without qualification by the Comptroller and Auditor General on 29 October 2024 and had now been laid before the NI Assembly.
- 4.2 The Director of Business Support advised that following national negotiations agreement had been reached on the 2024/25 pay settlement. For most staff there would be an increase of £1290 (pro rata for part time employees), an increase of 2.5% on all pay points above the maximum pay spine but below deputy chief officer and a 2.5% increase on all allowances. The payment settlement required departmental approval and a business case had been submitted to DfC for approval to implement the pay settlement.
- 4.3 The Director of Business Support reported that the Department of Finance Annual Theft and Fraud Report 2021-22 had been delayed but had now been published and a copy had been provided for Member's information.
- 4.4 The Director of Business Support reported that Libraries NI had been approached by Killynure Community Association with a request to consider the lease of amenity land adjacent to Carryduff Library for the purposes of establishing a Men's Shed. The Community Association had worked in partnership with Lisburn City and Castlereagh Council to secure funding for the project through the Peace Plus Programme. The proposed project had merit and aligned with DfC priorities in relation to supporting cultural and community confidence, participation and wellbeing and would serve to make best use of public land. LPS had been engaged to determine market rent for the land and it was proposed to establish a formal lease with Killynure Community Association for a term of 25 years at an annual rate of £300, with upward only rent reviews to market rent and a break clause every 5 years. A business case had been prepared and submitted to the department for consideration.
- 4.5 Mrs W Osborne enquired if the lease would cover the type of building the Community Association wanted to erect, if there could be issues with car parking provision; and commented that it would be important to get the detail of the lease right.
- 4.6 The Chairperson agreed that the details of the lease would be important and asked if this lease could be terminated if this was required, enquired regarding the status of Carryduff Library within the Strategic Plan for Libraries NI and requested that the Committee be made aware of feedback from DfC.

- 4.7 The Director of Business Support advised that the lease would cover conditions regarding the use of the building and activities which could be carried out in it. The car parking adjacent to Carryduff Library belonged to the Health Trust, a minimal increase in traffic was expected and there was also street parking nearby. This Library was in the Asset Management Plan as one of the long term development sites, it would require refurbishment at some point and Libraries NI would then consider if the library was meeting the needs of the area. The Director of Business Support confirmed that he would keep the Committee updated and advise on controls put in place.
- 4.8 The Chief Executive advised that one of challenges in Carryduff area was a lack of community spaces and the Council were encouraging the development of such spaces.

**5 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 BSC.02.11.24**

- 5.1 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 26 September 2024, were approved as a correct record of the meeting. it was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting on 17 October 2024.

**6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 BSC.03.11.24**

- 6.1 The Director of Business Support asked the Committee to consider if in light of the recent additions to its membership it was now able to proceed with the nomination and election of a vice-chairperson from the qualifying membership i.e. Councillor members.
- 6.2 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, Councillor M McRandal was nominated for the position of Vice-Chairperson.
- 6.3 Councillor M McRandal accepted the post of Vice-Chairperson.
- 6.4 The Director of Business Support advised that in response to a request from the Chairperson of the Board an overview of Health and Safety Management in Libraries NI had been provided, detailing the framework of interlinked and interdependent policies, procedures, resources and risk assessment mechanisms.
- 6.5 The Chairperson requested that the Director of Business Support discuss the Overview with Ms B Anley to ensure that her concerns had been addressed.
- 6.6 The Director of Business Support confirmed that he would discuss this with the Chairperson of the Board.

**7 COMMITTEE/ BOARD EFFECTIVENESS  
REVIEW 2024**

**BSC.04.11.24**

- 7.1 The Chairperson advised that the Committee was required to review its effectiveness annually, including the continued relevance of the Scheme of Delegation. It was proposed that the process should commence immediately with a view to completing it at the next Committee meeting on 30 January 2025.
- 7.2 Councillor M McRandal referred to the Scheme of Delegation Membership and commented that operating with four members was not ideal.
- 7.3 The Director of Business Support agreed this was not ideal and advised that a proposal was being brought to the Board to increase Committee membership to provide stable workable membership.
- 7.4 The Chief Executive commented that it was likely that some new Board members would end up on two committees, technically this Committee could proceed with only two members, but it wouldn't operate with less than three members.
- 7.5 Mrs W Osborne advised that the Committee needed three Board Members to attend consistently and more Members to ensure this happened.
- 7.6 The Director of Business Support advised that he would look at Standing Orders and draft an amendment to the membership clause.
- 7.7 The Chairperson thanked the Director of Business Support for drafting an amendment, to ensure that the Scheme of Delegation indicated that the Committee would not operate with only two members.
- 7.8 The Chairperson enquired regarding the Committee Effectiveness Review Point 8, noting that a greater range of information could be provided.
- 7.9 The Chief Executive advised that some of these papers and reports had been completed, but this would be reviewed and the information issued in a systematic way.
- 7.10 The Chairperson advised that Members should direct any comments, responses or questions directly to the Director of Business Support who would collate responses for further discussion at the Committee's January 2025 meeting.
- 7.11 Members agreed to initiate the process immediately.

## **8 DISPOSAL OF FORMER DUNMURRY LIBRARY PROPERTY**

**BSC.05.11.24**

- 8.1 The Assets Manager reported that as a result of a strategic review of public library provision in the Greater Belfast area the former Dunmurry Library was closed in June 2010 and the property subsequently declared surplus. A number of factors had delayed disposal of the surplus property however these had been resolved and Libraries NI were now in a position to bring the property to market.

The former Dunmurry Library was a joint user property in a building shared with the South Eastern Health Trust, it had been agreed that the properties would be marketed as a whole and the Trust would lead in managing the disposal. LPS had valued the combined properties and determined that the proceeds of the sale should be divided equally between the two organisations.

The closure of the former library and subsequent disposal of the surplus property was previously approved by the Board as part of the outworking of the 2010 Strategic Review however given the significant time that has passed it was considered appropriate to reaffirm the approval.

- 8.2 The Chairperson enquired when LPS had valued the property and would seeking planning permission make the property more valuable.
- 8.3 The Assets Manager advised that the valuation had been done within the last six months.
- 8.4 The Chief Executive proposed that the Assets Manager clarify with LPS regarding potential planning permission having been considered in the valuation.
- 8.5 The Director of Business Support advised that the Assets Manager would provide clarification at the January meeting, if approved this would still allow the property to be marketed in the new financial year and in the interim the process of getting departmental approval would continue.
- 8.6 Members agreed to wait for further information.

## **9 LIBRARIES NI STATUTORY EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

**BSC.06.11.24**

- 9.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Libraries NI Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2023-24, which was based on a template provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. It demonstrated the progress made in 2023/24 in implementing the Libraries NI Equality Scheme commitments and highlighted equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice and progress on Equality Scheme commitments. The Committee was requested to consider and if content to approve and recommend the Report to the Board of Libraries NI

for adoption prior to formal submission to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

- 9.2 Mrs W Osborne enquired regarding the value of this annual exercise, what did the Equality Commission do with the Report and requested that any feedback be shared with the Committee.
- 9.3 The Director of Business Support advised that completing this report was a mandatory requirement placed on Libraries NI by the Equality Commission. He was unsure what the Commission did with the Report but confirmed that they provided comments which were usually generic and he would share these with the Committee. To ensure deadlines were met a draft report had been submitted to Equality Commission on the understanding that the final draft would be provided when it had been approved by Board. Libraries NI Equality Scheme was due to be reviewed in 2025, work had begun on this.
- 9.4 The Chairperson noted that there was no mention of industrial action short of strike and enquired if this should be included.
- 9.5 The Head of HR reported that some staff involved in the industrial action short of strike had not engaged with training.
- 9.6 The Chief Executive suggested that at 24 “attendance at training was impacted by industrial action” be added.
- 9.7 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, subject to the additional wording proposed by the Chief Executive, the Libraries NI Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2023-24, was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

9.8 *At 11:34am Councillor R Lynch left meeting*

**10 BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICE PLAN 2024/25 BSC.07.11.24  
PROGRESS REPORT**

- 10.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Progress Report which detailed the progress to date in delivering on a range of targets as set out in Business Support Service Plan 2024/25. Individual actions and targets had been assigned a Red/Amber/Green status reflecting progress to date and taking account of the anticipated position in March 2025 (i.e. delivery confidence)
- 10.2 The Chief Executive advised that an update on the Public Library Strategy would be provided to the Board in December when John Ball from DfC would be attending; it was hoped that the draft policy would go out to consultation in the New Year.

- 10.3 The Director of Business Support advised that the October and January monitoring rounds had been completed and although additional funding had not yet been confirmed it was expected for library stock; this would increase the per capita stock spend.
- 10.4 Councillor M McRandal commented that the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy was important and enquired regarding a reasonable target for moving this forward and developing this strategy.
- 10.5 The Head of HR advised that she had engaged with Investors in People who have a specific service to provide an independent view of where the Organisation was currently and some indicators of where our employees and the Organisation needed to be. Progress had been delayed because of industrial action short of strike as it was important that staff engage in the survey. The survey could be tailored to the Organisation and nine months would be a realistic timeframe to get this in place.
- 10.6 The Chief Executive reported that time had been taken to explore options for developing a Health and Wellbeing Strategy, it was important to do this right rather than rush it. Good groundwork had been done and Libraries NI were now in a better position to take this important piece of work forward.
- 10.7 Councillor M McRandal enquired regarding the target for completion of staff appraisals.
- 10.8 The Director of Business Support reported that completion of appraisals across the Organisation had been impacted by industrial action and for Business Support staffing issues had also impact this and it was unlikely to improve this year.
- 10.9 The Chairperson enquired regarding the percentage of appraisals completed and commented on the importance of this in terms of staff feeling valued.
- 10.10 The Head of HR reported that 5-10% of appraisals had been completed which was very concerning, staff needed help to understand why performance reviews were important. There had been a number of new appointees and training for appraisers and appraisees had been identified.
- 10.11 Mrs W Osborne advised that she understood the constraints due to industrial action and was aware of the lack of HR resources, but a road map was required outlining how this will change and what resources would be put in place to make it happen. The Organisation was treading water and lagging well behind good practice, the Senior Team needed to give this consideration and a step change was needed.
- 10.12 The Head of HR advised that the Senior Management Team had approved a review of the HR structure, challenges such as industrial action and

disciplinary processes had been factored in for business continuity going forward and to meet objectives.

- 10.13 The Director of Business Support advised that the HR team had been operating under difficult circumstances, industrial relations had impacted capacity, the review of HR structure had been considered and new posts had been approved.
- 10.14 The Chief Executive advised that a road map and action plan would be drawn up for the two areas of Staff Appraisal and Health and Wellbeing; with specific focus performance should improve.
- 10.15 The Director of Business Support advised that work would continue with DfC to restart discussions around a strategy and approach for the Belfast Central Library project.
- 10.16 Mrs W Osborne noted that the funding had not be received to proceed with the five targeted energy management infrastructure projects and enquired how the Organisation would meet the target of reducing energy consumption. Was this being evaluated by positive actions or reducing energy consumption by 30%.
- 10.17 The Director of Business Support advised that by buying electricity from greener sources it was possible to reduced consumption by 17/18%. While the premier projects had not proceeded, lots of small changes e.g. replacing lighting, were impacting energy consumption. Support at a departmental level would be needed to proceed with the bigger projects.
- 10.18 The Chairperson suggested that target 10.6 and 10.7 needed to be more specific and to factor in the lack of funding impacting projects proceeding.
- 10.19 The Chief Executive confirmed that the Northern Ireland target was a 30% reduction in energy consumption, Libraries NI could produce a measurement but needed to consider how meaningful the target was.
- 10.20 Members noted the Progress Report.

## **11 BUSINESS SUPPORT RISK REGISTER 2024/25 BSC.08.11.24 UPDATE REPORT**

- 11.1 The Director of Business Support presented the revised Business Support Risk Register 2024/25 which had been updated to reflect the current business environment and take account of mitigating actions taken to date and new or emerging risks which have been identified in the period from May 2024.



- 11.2 Mrs W Osborne enquired regarding the deadline for implementing the IIP Staff Survey to provide baseline information to develop the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 11.3 The Director of Business Support advised that the deadline was likely to be September 2025.
- 11.4 The Chairperson enquired regarding Risk 4 and supplementary funding for stock funding.
- 11.5 The Director of Business Support reported that he was hopeful of additional funding for stock from the monitoring round but this had not been confirmed.
- 11.6 Members noted the Update Report.

**12 INFORMATION SYSTEMS e3 PROGRAMME BSC.09.11.24  
UPDATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2024**

- 12.1 The Head of ICU/ICT presented the Information Systems e3 Programme Update Report November 2024 advising that card payments were now being rolled out to all branches which would improve cash management. The latest release of Civica had not achieved all that was required, some issues were still appearing and these had been escalated back to Civica and Fujitsu. A lot of work was being done around the move to Azure/Cloud.
- 12.2 The Chief Executive enquired if the move to Azure had any implications for Board Members.
- 12.3 The Head of ICU/ICT advised if there were any upgrades Board Members would be contacted; there was a small team to help with induction, support new Board Members or answer any questions.
- 12.4 Members noted the Report.

**13 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT 2023/24 BSC.10.11.24**

- 13.1 The Head of HR presented the Customer Feedback Report 2023/24 providing detail of the volume of feedback received from library service users, the nature and the focus of that feedback and examples of feedback received, the subject matter and responses issued for the period from 01 October 2023 to 30 September 2024.
- 13.2 Mrs W Osborne noted the stark difference between the level of feedback in the N&W and S&E and the 20% downturn in feedback.
- 13.3 The Director of Business Support advised that there was no explanation for the contrast between N&W and S&E. The 20% decrease in feedback

perhaps reflected a degree of weariness and resignation from the public with the provision of public services in general.

13.4 The Chairperson thanked the Head of HR for the extra work in expanding this report at the request of the Committee.

13.5 Members noted the Report.

## **14 FINANCE REPORTS**

### **14.1 RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO OCTOBER 2024 BSC.11.11.24**

14.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure and Income Report for the seven months to 31 October 2024.

14.3 Members noted the Report.

### **14.4 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO OCTOBER 2024 BSC.12.11.24**

14.5 The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report for the seven months to 31 October 2024.

14.6 Members noted the Report.

## **15 PROCUREMENT REPORT BSC.13.11.24**

15.1 The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report informing the Committee of procurement activity over £1,000 and single tender actions for the period from 19 September 2024 to 18 November 2024.

15.2 The Chairperson noted that online yoga sessions had been procured and enquired if these sessions had a direct link to library services.

15.3 The Director of Business Support advised that these activities tied into delivery of the health agenda.

15.4 Members noted the Report.

## **16 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO OCTOBER 2024 BSC.14.11.24**

16.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report which provided sickness absence statistics to 31 October 2024. The performance target set for the 2023/24 year was to maintain sickness absence (composite average Full Time Equivalent days lost) at or below 10.5 days by 31 March 2025. The target was not being achieved with the current absence rate at 12.49 FTE days. Absence management continued to be a priority for the Health and Wellbeing, analysis was provided to managers on a monthly basis, recently in house training had been provided

to managers to assist them in being pro-active in absence management. Long term sickness absence had decreased, while medium term had increased, the top five sickness absence reasons had not changed. Bereavement Leave was being reviewed, benchmarking against other organisations. HR had recently met with the senior Occupational Health doctor.

16.2 The Chairperson asked if the Occupational Health Provider could be changed and what “managed locally” meant?

16.3 The Head of HR advised that the Occupational Health provider could be changed if necessary and “managed locally” referred to someone for whom a referral to Occupational Health was not currently appropriate e.g. someone who had been diagnosed with cancer.

16.4 Members noted the Report.

## **17 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL BSC.15.11.24**

17.1 The Chairperson presented the Report on the Use of the Common Seal, detailing the one occasion when the Common Seal of the Northern Ireland Library Authority had been applied between September 2024 and November 2024.

17.2 Members noted the Report.

## **18 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

18.1 There was no other notified business.

## **19 DATE OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

19.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 30 January 2025 at 10:30am.

## **20 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

20.1 The meeting ended at 12:28 pm.

20.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting with the following exception:-

- Councillor R Lynch left the meeting at 11:34am