

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Lisburn City Library and by remote video link (Zoom) on Thursday 27 April 2023 at 10:30 am

PRESENT

Professor Bernard Cullen
Councillor Julie Gilmour

Chairperson
Vice-Chairperson

Councillor Cheryl Brownlee
Alderman Thomas Burns
Councillor Alistair Cathcart
Councillor Peter Johnston
Mrs Deirdre Kenny
Councillor Donal Lyons
Councillor Andrew McAuley
Councillor Martin McRandal
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE
Mr John Peto
Mr Harry Reid
Dr Margaret Ward
Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP
Miss Linda Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Jim O'Hagan
Mr Desi Miskelly
Ms Adrienne Adair
Ms Stefani Millar
Ms Fionnuala Elliott
Heather Gardiner
Paul Kelly

Chief Executive
Director of Business Support
Director of Library Services
Boardroom Apprentice
Department for Communities
Data Protection Officer
Senior Services Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

None

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 the following to their first meeting of the Libraries NI Board:

- Ms F Elliott, Department for Communities (DfC) who is attending remotely as an observer
- the three new Board Members i.e. Councillor A McAuley, Councillor P Johnston and Councillor M McRandal.

3.2 He reminded Board Members that, with Local Government Elections due to take place on 18 May 2023, a period of pre-election sensitivity (purdah) had commenced and referred Members to the recent guidance which had been issued by the Chief Executive's Office. He wished Councillor Members' success and best wishes in the forthcoming elections.

3.3 The Chairperson reminded Members that the Libraries NI Board was entering a period of substantial change as outlined below:

- the term of appointment on the Libraries NI Board for Councillor Board Members would end on the date of the Local Government Election i.e. 18 May 2023 and that this would also mark the completion of the tenure of a number of Board Members who having served two terms were not eligible for reappointment i.e. Councillor T Burns, Councillor D Lyons, Councillor C Mallaghan and Councillor B Webb
- a number of Councillor Board Members who have only completed one term on the Board, if re-elected would be eligible for reappointment i.e. Councillor C Brownlee, Councillor A Cathcart and Councillor J Gilmour. He reminded Members that the three most recently appointed Councillor Board Members had, subject to re-election, been appointed through to the Local Government Elections in May 2027
- prior to the next Board Meeting in July 2023 a number of non-Councillor Board Members would also have completed their terms of appointment i.e. Mrs D Kenny, Mr H Reid and Dr M Ward. Three non-Councillor Members will have served one term and will be eligible for reappointment: Mrs W Osborne, Mr J Peto and Ms L Wilson.

3.4 The Chairperson reported that together with the Chief Executive he had met with Mr J McCord, Acting Director of Culture, Department for Communities, to appraise him of matters relating to the tenure of Board Members and to ask that processes, to both reappoint existing eligible Board Members, and to make new appointments, were progressed on a timely basis. The importance of this, to the effective operation of the Libraries NI Board and Committees, was impressed upon the Department.

- 3.5 The Chairperson explained that as the Libraries NI Board was entering into a period of transition it would be necessary to review membership of Committees and other Board positions. The three most recently appointed Board Members had been invited to take up membership of Committees for which Board approval is required.
- 3.6 On a proposal by Councillor B Webb, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour the Board approved the appointment of Councillor A McAuley to the Services Committee.
- 37 On a proposal by Councillor T Burns, seconded by Mrs D Kenny the Board approved the appointment of Councillor P Johnston to the Business Support Committee.
- 3.8 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor B Webb, the Board approved the appointment of Councillor M McRandal to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- 3.9 It was also noted that the term of office for the position of Vice-Chairperson of the Board is normally two years and the current Vice-Chairperson, Councillor J Gilmour will have completed two years in that role by the next meeting of the Board. Normally this position is elected from the Councillor Members. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would liaise with Councillor Members after the Local Government Elections and prior to the July Board meeting to seek expressions of interest in this position which would be considered by the Board at its next meeting to be held on 6 July 2023.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the paper which had been circulated, drawing attention to the undernoted items:
- Department for Communities / Arm's Length Bodies Senior Leadership Forum Meeting held on 9 March 2023
 - Libraries NI Budget 2023/24
 - Approval for Removal of Charges for Requests
 - Pay and Grading Review
 - Boardroom Apprentice 2023
 - Ulster Orchestra in Libraries
 - Seed Libraries
 - Lurgan Library Heritage Placeshaping Brochure
 - Libraries – Culture Arts and Heritage engagement event
 - World Book Day, 2 March 2023
 - Reading Well for Children – Belfast Telegraph Article
 - e3 Stage 4 Gateway Review Assessment

- Ormeau Road Library – Recognition as a library of sanctuary
- Libraries NI – Fundraising and Support for Charities
- UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry correspondence
- Assembly Questions

4.2 The Chief Executive drew attention to the correspondence received from Ms E Mullan, founder of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme who advised that the Department of Finance would no longer be able to support the scheme and to assist in contingency planning for 2023 had asked Host Boards to respond to the following two questions:

- If there **was** to be a 2023 Boardroom Apprentice Programme would you like to remain as a host board?
- If there was **not** to be a 2023 Boardroom Apprentice programme is providing your current Boardroom Apprentice with an additional year of experience something you would consider?

4.3 He confirmed that he had discussed this matter with the Chairperson and provided an indicative response of 'yes' to both questions on behalf of the Board. Members agreed that this was a very worthwhile and beneficial scheme and recognised that although Libraries NI could not support the Boardroom Apprentice programme financially it could support it in other ways such as providing meeting spaces and continuing as a host board. The Board confirmed that it was content to continue to support the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme in 2023 as set out in the two options shown in paragraph 4.2 above.

4.4 Members noted the report.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2023 **LNI 01.04.23**

5.1 On a proposal by Mrs D Kenny, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 9 February 2023 were approved.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2023 **LNI 02.04.23**

6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting that an update would be provided on the following issues.

Item 6.3: Matters Arising from the meeting of the Board held on 9 February 2023

6.2 Members noted that the Chairperson and Chief Executive had met with Mr J McCord, Acting Director, DfC on 28 March 2023 to discuss a number of Board related matters.

Item 6.5: Matters Arising from the meeting of the Board held on 9 February 2023

- 6.3 It was noted that a proposal to amend the name of Bangor Carnegie Library to reflect Bangor's recently conferred City status was being progressed.

Item 7.3: Draft Annual Business Plan 2023/24

- 6.4 Members noted that this item has been completed and that a copy of the Libraries NI Business Plan targets for 2023/24 were forwarded to DfC on 27 March 2023.

Item 7.4: Draft Annual Business Plan 2023/24

- 6.5 It was noted that this item was completed and amendments to the Business Plan at paragraph 1.6: Our Network and Services on page 5 in relation to cultural experiences provided by libraries such as art and music and an amendment to the graphic on page 6 to reflect the aforementioned additions would be accommodated in the next iteration of the Business Plan.

Item 11.4: Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 18 January 2023

- 6.6 This item has also been completed. Officers have been in discussions with the Department regarding the appointment of an additional co-opted Member to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. An Expression of Interest document has been prepared and engagement has taken place with DfC with regard to issuing this to government departments.

Members agreed to take Agenda Item 7: Indicative Financial Allocation 2023/24 at the end of the meeting and proceeded to Agenda Item 8.

7. REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 APRIL 2023

- 7.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee provided an oral report of the Committee meeting which she had chaired on 26 April 2023, the formal minutes of the meeting would be available at the next Board Meeting to be held on 6 July 2023. She confirmed that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had recommended approval of the following items to the Board:

- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2023
- Annual Board Assurance Statement 2022/23 (as presented)
- Corporate Risk Register (March 2023)
- proposed change to the way risks and risk appetite is evaluated and expressed which would result in a move away from a numerical score to colour coding.

- 7.2 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee also highlighted the following items that were presented at the meeting:

- prior to the Committee meeting, the annual bi-lateral meeting had taken place with the Head of Internal Audit to discuss risk, control and governance. The Head of Internal Audit had given the Committee her assurance on these matters and confirmed that there had been no impairment to the independence of Internal Audit and that appropriate resources and support were in place to facilitate Internal Audit to carry out its responsibilities
- the External Audit Strategy for 2022/23 had been presented to the Committee
- the Internal Audit Draft Annual Report 2022/23 had been presented to the Committee and the Head of Internal Audit had confirmed a 'satisfactory' opinion on the risk, control and governance framework in Libraries NI
- a draft of the Governance Statement, for inclusion in the 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts, had been considered and noted
- Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2023/24

7.3 It was noted that this meeting would be Councillor B Webb's last Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting and on behalf of Officers and Members the Chairperson thanked Councillor Webb for his contribution to the Committee.

7.4 Members noted the report.

8. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 04.04.23

8.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support briefed the Board on the Management Report.

Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023)

LNI 04.04.23 (i)

8.2 The Chief Executive presented the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2023 and drew attention in particular to Section 2: Board and Committees, Section 3: Risk Management and Section 5: Financial Planning and Monitoring. He also drew attention to those areas of the Statement which had been marked 'Working towards Compliance'.

8.3 Mrs W Osborne, Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee confirmed that the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at the meeting held on 26 April 2023 and that Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval.

8.4 On a proposal by Mrs D Kenny, seconded by Miss L Wilson, having exercised its challenge function and received the required assurances from the

Accounting Officer, the Board was content to approve the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2023.

- 8.5 Members noted the signed Statement would be forwarded to the Department for their records.

Annual Board Assurance Statement 2022/23 LNI 04.04.23 (ii)

- 8.6 The Chairperson presented the Annual Board Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 drawing attention in particular to the 'Issues' section. He noted that the document had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 26 April 2023. At that meeting Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval. On a suggestion from Miss L Wilson, it was agreed to amend Point 1 at Section 2: Responsibilities of the Chair to include the footnote as included at point 3 in the same section.

- 8.7 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Alderman T Burns, Members approved the Chairperson's Annual Board Assurance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023 to include the amendment as at paragraph 8.6 above.

- 8.8 Members noted the signed Statement would also be forwarded to the Department for their records.

Corporate Risk Register LNI 04.04.23 (iii)

- 8.9 The Director of Business Support drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Risk Management Group at its meeting held on 29 March 2023 and subsequently by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 26 April 2023.

- 8.10 He noted that as agreed at the January meeting of the Committee the new format had been adopted for the Corporate Risk Register. He discussed each risk in turn explaining the difficulties and challenges faced by the organisation and the resulting risk rating. He also drew attention to the proposal to amend the risk score evaluation framework and associated risk appetite scoring on the Corporate Risk Register, and explained that it was proposed to remove the numerical scoring but to retain and expand the colour coding system.

- 8.11 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor B Webb, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at March 2023.

- 8.12 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the proposed change to the way risks and risk appetite were evaluated and presented, including a move away from a numerical score to colour coding which is aligned to risk appetite.

Finance Reports: February 2023 LNI 04.04.23 (iv)

- 8.13 The Director of Business Support informed Members that having had sight of the provisional March expenditure reports he was content that pending completion of the draft 2022/23 Accounts the projections made in the February finance reports remained valid. He referred to the Recurrent Report noting that

an underspend of £97,000 (0.3%) was being projected at year end which was within the 1% tolerance limit. He then reported on the Capital Report noting that the position at year end now reflected full expenditure against budget i.e. zero variance with no material over/underspend.

8.14 Members asked that their thanks be relayed to the stock team who due to good processes being in place, were able to purchase stock at short notice when funding becomes available.

8.15 Members noted the report.

9. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 MARCH 2023
LNI 05.04.23

9.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023.

9.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 16 March 2023 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

9.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the Draft Rural Needs Annual Report.

10. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON
30 MARCH 2023
LNI 06.04.23

10.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Alderman T Burns, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2023.

10.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee Alderman T Burns, seconded by Councillor B Webb, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 30 March 2023 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

10.3 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Committee Alderman T Burns, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Board approved and adopted the:

- Bullying and Harassment Policy Review
- Records Management Policy Review

10.4 The Committee Chairperson informed Members that this would be his last meeting as a Board Member on the Libraries NI Board. He thanked Members and Officers for their support to him during his tenure and especially thanked the Director of Business Support for his advice and support while he was Chairperson of the Business Support Committee. Members and Officers

thanked Alderman Burns for his service and extended best wishes to him for the future.

Members agreed to return to Agenda Item 7.

11. INDICATIVE FINANCIAL ALLOCATION 2023/24: LNI 03.04.23

- 11.1 The Chairperson asked the Observers to withdraw from the meeting.
- 11.2 The Director of Business Support introduced this report and informed Members that in the continuing absence of the Northern Ireland Executive, responsibility for setting a budget for 2023/24 rested with the NI Secretary of State (SoS). While the SoS had yet to formally confirm budget outcomes, individual Northern Ireland Departments had provided organisations which they fund with 'indicative allocations' for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 11.3 In setting out the indicative resource and capital allocations the DfC Permanent Secretary had highlighted the challenging financial landscape within which decisions had been made, the subsequent constraints for public services and the requirements for stringent management of expenditure. The indicative financial allocation provided for 2023/24 comprises two elements:
- a resource allocation of **£27,486,000** and;
 - a capital allocation of **£3,631,000**
- 11.4 He reminded Members of the significant budgetary pressures experienced in 2022/23 as the impacts of inflation, escalating energy costs and economic instability were felt and that it was expected that many of these pressures would continue throughout 2023. The removal of in year funding provided in 2022/23 to meet inescapable pressures from the budgeting equation plus the application of a general 10% reduction in baseline funding equated to a significant reduction in the resources available to operate and deliver library services. By way of comparison the resource allocation for 2023/24 equated to a reduction of some £1,639,000 from the indicative allocation made in April 2022 and some £3,501,000 from the budget available to Libraries NI at 31 March 2023.
- 11.5 Similarly the indicative capital allocation for 2023/24 has been subject to significant constraint with only inescapable and existing contractual commitments being considered for funding. While the £3,631,000 allocated supports the continued delivery of the e3 project no other capital infrastructure projects have been funded at this time. The reduction in capital funding (some 30% or £1,548,000 less than 2022/23) presents significant challenges for the delivery of the estate and infrastructure investment programme, provides no resource to address climate change issues and would reduce the ability to effectively plan for and develop projects to support the future delivery of public library services.

- 11.6 Members noted that as budgets had not been agreed nor set at Executive or Departmental level Libraries NI as an ALB could not technically set a budget for the organisation at this time. However, in light of the indicative allocation provided and the authority to spend conferred by DfC, Officers could begin to plan expenditure for 2023/24, assess the impacts of the financial allocation on service delivery and identify actions to contain and control expenditure with a view to returning to the matter later in the year to agree and approve a resource budget for the organisation.
- 11.7 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the proposed Interim Spending Plan for 2023/24 which had been developed on the basis of an indicative resource allocation of £27,486,000, a decrease of £1,639,000 on the 2022/23 opening baseline. He reported that as the new financial year began there were a number of areas where new financial pressures were emerging or where pressures accumulated in the previous year would continue to increase.
- 11.8 Members discussed the indicative financial allocation and agreed the importance of messaging to the public on how the out-workings of the budget settlement would impact on services provided by Libraries NI to children, the vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. The Chief Executive reported that he had asked staff to detail how a reduced budget allocation would impact on service delivery. It was agreed that when the budget allocation had been confirmed a special meeting of the Board may be required.
- 11.9 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, seconded by Mrs D Kenny the Board approved and adopted the Interim Spending Plan for 2023/24 as a framework within which expenditure would be monitored and controlled until such times as a formal budget proposal could be brought forward for consideration.

12. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

- 12.1 There was no other notified business.
- 12.2 The Chairperson on behalf of Members and Officers thanked those Members whose term of appointment was coming to an end for their service, support and contributions to the Board of Libraries NI during the course of their tenure and wished them well for the future. He suggested a social event would be organised in the autumn to which Members would be invited.
- 12.3 Councillor B Webb thanked Members and Officers for their support and added that he had enjoyed being a Board Member and that the Board and Libraries NI as an organisation acted in a professional way and wished Libraries NI every success in the future. Mrs D Kenny echoed Councillor Webb's sentiments.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 6 July 2023 at 10.30 am in Lisburn City Library and / or remotely via video link.

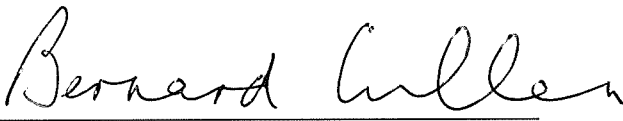
14. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 14.1 The meeting ended at 12.28 pm.
- 14.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Councillor D Lyons joined the meeting at 10.35 am
Councillor C Mallaghan joined the meeting at 10.39 am
Councillor C Brownlee joined the meeting at 10.52 am

Ms S Millar left the meeting at 11.28 am
Councillor C Mallaghan left at 11.49 am
Councillor C Brownlee left the meeting at 12.12 pm

Signed:


Professor Bernard Cullen, Chairperson

Date:

06-07-23