

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 29 May 2025 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 (IP)	Vice-Chairperson
Ms Bonnie Anley (VL)	Chairperson of Libraries NI Board
Councillor Roisin Lynch (IP)	
Councillor Julie Gilmour (IP)	
Ms Ursula O'Hare (VL)	

IN ATTENDANCE

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

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

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.

Ms B Anley joined the meeting at 10:32am

3 CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 There was no Chairperson's Business.

4.1 The Director of Business Support reported that taking account of the interim funding arrangement approved by the Board in April he had written to DfC on 08 May 2025 highlighting the mounting financial pressures and growing risk that expenditure on core services and contractual commitments would by 30 June 2025 exceed the interim allocation. In response the Department advised that confirmation of allocations was imminent. The Director of Business Support advised he had been notified of the indicative financial allocation but was unable to discuss this as it was embargoed pending the Minister making a statement, this statement had subsequently been delayed three times. The Director of Business Support apologised for his vagueness, advised that it was a relatively healthy allocation which would support business need for the rest of the year and reported that Libraries NI had also been asked to bid for the June monitoring round.

4.2 Councillor R Lynch thanked the Director of Business Support for the update and for advising that direction of travel was better than expected.

4.3 Miss L Wilson noted that confirmation of the financial allocation would now be notified directly to Board and not go through Business Support Committee.

4.4 Ms B Anley enquired why the Minister's announcement had been delayed.

4.5 Councillor M McRandal enquired if Libraries NI could be confident of the allocation.

4.6 The Director of Business Support advised that the announcement had been delayed because of competing priorities. That he was confident there wouldn't be a reduction and he had a letter advising of the allocation. The June monitoring round had commenced with a fast turnaround, there would be two bids, one against resourcing funding and one against capital. There were constant issues around having the right funding for some items due to accounting practices e.g. library shelving is classified as capital and can't be procured with resource funding.

4.7 Councillor J Gilmour enquired why the Minister needed to make a statement. While she had absolute confidence in Libraries NI's staff, it was the role of the Board to ensure proper governance and she enquired if there were governance issues with fact that the allocation could not be discussed.

4.8 The Chief Executive advised that this was unusual but he was aware of other bodies within DfC's remit who had been advised of their individual allocation and were also embargoed. The Minister and DfC didn't want discussion until the Minister made the announcement.

4.9 Miss L Wilson requested that the Director of Business Support email Members when the embargo was lifted and advise them of the allocation.

4.10 The Director of Business Support confirmed that he would notify Members when the embargo was lifted.

4.11 The Director of Business Support advised that in light of recent media coverage of high profile cyber security incidents, M&S, Co-op, discussion at the recent Services Committee and previous reports relating to the British Library it would be prudent to continue to inform and update Board members on cyber security matters within the Organisation. Therefore, details of IT/Cyber Security Protocols had been provided with the papers for information.

4.12 The Chief Executive reassured Members that the area of ICT and cyber security was very prominent in Organisation's agenda.

**5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE BSC.02.05.25
HELD ON 27 MARCH 2025**

5.1 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 27 March 2025, were approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to the following amendment:

- at 7.4 amended indicator to indicators

It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting on 17 April 2025 as an as read record of the Business Support Committee's proceeding of 30 January 2025.

**6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BSC.03.05.25
MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2025**

6.1 The Director of Business Support advised that there was one matter arising in relation to authority to spend in the absence of a financial allocation for 2025/26. On 02 April 2025 DfC had confirmed authority to continue to conduct business, deliver services and expend resources in the first quarter of the year.

**7 DOMESTIC SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE BSC.04.05.25
POLICY**

7.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Domestic Sexual Violence and Abuse Policy, which was a new policy that has been developed in consultation with Trade Unions with the aim of facilitating and supporting a workplace culture in which there is zero tolerance for abuse and in which measures are available to support staff to be free from Domestic, Sexual Violence and Abuse.

Ms U O'Hare jointed the meeting at 10:54am.

7.2 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Domestic Sexual Violence and Abuse Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

8 SMOKE FREE WORKPLACE (REVIEW) BSC.05.05.25

8.1 The Assets Manager presented the Smoke Free Workplace Policy which had been reviewed. The policy was, in general, considered to remain fit for purpose, however the opportunity had been taken to make minor revisions to update references and terminology where appropriate.

8.2 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the reviewed Smoke Free Workplace Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

9 MENOPAUSE POLICY REVIEW BSC.06.05.25

9.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Menopause Policy, which had been reviewed. The policy was, in general, considered to remain fit for purpose however the opportunity had been taken to make minor revisions to update references and terminology where appropriate.

9.2 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the reviewed Menopause Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

10 PROCUREMENT POLICY (REVIEW) BSC.07.05.25

10.1 The Finance Manager presented Procurement Policy, the contents and intent of the Policy have been reviewed. While the policy intent and purpose remained unchanged several amendments had been incorporated taking account of the introduction of the Procurement Regulations 2024 and the objectives which these regulations set out in relation to public sector procurement activities.

10.2 Ms U O'Hare enquired regarding the additional wording in paragraph 3.

10.3 The Finance Manager advised that the additional wording came from the new procurement regulations, which had an emphasis on social value and there was scope within larger procurements to consider social value.

10.4 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the reviewed Procurement Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

11 BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICE PLAN 2025/26 BSC.08.05.25

11.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Business Support Service Plan 2025/26, setting out the targets for and actions to be taken by Business Support Officers throughout 2025/26 to facilitate and support delivery of the organisational wide strategic objectives and goals. The Plan had been drafted prior to confirmation of financial allocations on the assumption that sufficient resources would be available to facilitate delivery. This was a live document which may require revision should planning assumptions change significantly, the Committee and Board would be kept informed of progress.

11.2 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the phrase “in line with available resources” at 11.1 and commented that surely this applied to all actions; why were there multiple owners at 11.2 and 11.3 and enquired regarding the aim at 11.3.

11.3 The Director of Business Support advised that he would take on board the comment regarding the phrase “in line with available resources” and advised that 11.2 had multiple owners because asset management required a lot of consultation.

11.4 The Chief Executive reported regarding 11.3, Belfast Central Library Redevelopment Project, that Libraries NI were engaged with an ILA event, a pre-event had taken place and the main event would take place in June.

11.5 Ms B Anley suggested that Department of Finance be added.

11.6 The Chief Executive advised that the initiative was DfC lead and therefore would leave the Plan as it was.

11.7 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Business Support Service Plan 2025/26 was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

12 BUSINESS SUPPORT RISK REGISTER 2025/26 BSC.09.05.25

12.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Business Support Risk Register 2025/26 which had been updated to reflect the current business environment. It would be subject to further refinements/revisions once the financial allocations had been announced, it was a live document which would be brought back to the Committee during the year reviewed and updated.

12.2 Miss L Wilson referred to page 6 and enquired if the development of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy should be detailed on a separate line in the Additional Action Plan.

12.3 The Director of Business Support advised that baseline survey was the first step in developing the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and he would be happy to add an additional line to the action plan.

- 12.4 Ms B Anley referred to Risk 5 Planning, noting that this remained red and enquired if it should be emphasised that this was because of a lack of resourcing rather than a lack of planning.
- 12.5 The Director of Business Support advised that he would take this on board, would first look at wording for the Corporate Risk Register and then reflect back.
- 12.6 Ms U O'Hare enquired if Risk 7, Business Continuity Planning, should include the Cyber Response Plan under additional action plan.
- 12.7 The Director of Business Support advised that the Cyber Response Plan had been included under Risk 6, Information Security.
- 12.8 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandall, seconded by Ms B Anley, the Business Support Risk Register 2025/26 was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

**13 INFORMATION SYSTEMS E3 PROGRAMME UPDATE BSC.10.05.25
REPORT MAY 2025**

- 13.1 The Head of ICT/ICU presented the Information Systems e3 Programme Update Report May 2025, updating the Committee on progress made in relation to the Information Systems e3 programme. Key operability and library management system milestones and the implementation of card payments were complete. Work on public facing milestones was almost complete, the new mileage and expenses system had been rolled out, work on the e-recruitment system had been extended to address one significant problem area. Work was continuing on the refresh phase with PCs being replaced in approximately two libraries each day, the temporary team of support and implementation officers had been extended to 31 August 2025 to support remaining implementation activities.
- 13.2 Councillor M McRandall enquired when the e3 Programme would be complete.
- 13.3 The Head of ICT/ICU advised that the desktop rollout would be complete by 31 July 2025, and HR system would be complete at a time which suited the HR Department, the existing system could continue to 31 March 2026.
- 13.4 Members noted the Report.

14 FINANCE REPORTS

**14.1 RESOURCE EXPENDITURE AND INCOME REPORT BSC.11.05.25
TO MARCH 2025**

- 14.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure and Income Report detailing the results for the twelve months to 31 March 2025.

14.3 Councillor M McRandal enquired regarding the variances in staff training and stock support.

14.4 The Finance Manager advised that variances related to planned activities that hadn't completed before the year end. For stock support this would include activities such as book binding.

14.5 The Director of Business Support advised that the variance in staff training didn't mean that training didn't happen but that there had been delays in delivery.

14.6 Members noted the Report.

14.7 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO MARCH 2025 BSC.12.05.25

14.8 The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report detailing capital expenditure for the year to 31 March 2025, which had come in under budget and within 1% tolerance range permitted by DfC.

14.9 Miss L Wilson acknowledge the work of the stock team in processing the large late allocations.

14.10 Members noted the Report.

**15 PROCUREMENT REPORT – TENDERS OVER £1,000 BSC.13.05.25
AND SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000**

15.1 The Finance Manager presented the Report covering procurements over £1,000, single tender actions and lease renewals, advising that there was no reportable procurement activity for the period from 19 March 2025 to 13 May 2025.

15.2 Members noted the Report.

16 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO APRIL 2025 BSC.14.05.25

16.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report for the 12 months from 01 May 2024 to 30 April 2025. The target set for 2025/26 was to maintain sickness absence (composite average full time equivalent days lost) at or below 11.5 days by 31 March 2026. Sickness absence levels in April 2025 were 13.13 days (FTE equivalent), a decrease of 3.43% from the March 2025 position. Work to procure a health and wellbeing survey and develop a strategy was on target, the new Human Resources structure had been approved by SMT and the staff appraisal process had commenced.

16.2 Councillor M McRandal enquired regarding the variance in figures on pages five and six; and how long term sickness is determined.

16.3 The Head of Human Resources explained that the variance in figures was due to staff with more than one illness and advised that absence of four weeks or more was long term.

16.4 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the staff appraisal process, communication, completion of training and deadlines for completion.

16.5 The Head of Human Resources advised that communication had been included in the staff newsletter, there had been discussion with senior management to get buy in, the Learning and Development Officer was using the new system to monitor and organise the appraisal process. HR staff had attended managers meetings to emphasise the need for planning and dedicated time, the aim of the appraisal process, the support available and identify learning and development needs. Appraisals had been done, and Libraries NI was aiming for 90% completion by September.

16.6 The Director of Business Support reported that all Business Support staff at the table had their appraisal completed and were working to complete appraisals with their teams.

16.7 Miss L Wilson commented that it was encouraging to see officers leading by example, clearly a lot of work had been invested and enquired if there was a follow up plan.

16.8 The Head of Human Resources advised that the follow up plan would start in June, checking if appraisals which hadn't been completed had been scheduled, if the process was proceeding as planned, informing a training needs analysis and then a learning plan.

16.9 The Director of Business Support advised that the People Live system provided the schedule and completion function, allowing the process to be monitored and the appraisal document to be uploaded.

16.10 Ms B Anley enquired regarding the new system and process for looking at appraisal feedback, did managers know to flag up an area of concern, was there an ad hoc check on appraisals, would feedback be collated in a uniform way and would the Committee receive collated feedback.

16.11 The Head of Human Resources advised that the current focus was on scheduling; while the resource within the team was limited the plan was to look at every appraisal, and she was hopeful she could provide feedback to the Committee in a measurable form.

16.12 The Chief Executive advised that there were a number of things happening in the Organisation reinvigorating the focus on staff and he would be cautious about information coming out the process but advised that IIP would provide qualitative information.

16.13 Miss L Wilson enquired if it would be possible to provide more information regarding completion rate of appraisals.

16.14 The Head of Human Resources confirmed she would provide information on the completion rate.

16.15 Members noted the Report.

17 REPORT ON PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE 2024/25 **BSC.15.05.25**

17.1 The Finance Manager presented the Report updating the Committee on performance against the Prompt Payment of Invoices Key Performance Indicator for 2024/25. The results had been impacted by the additional budget allocations of £1.4m for book stock in December 2024 which created significant demand on resources in the final quarter of the financial year, impacting on the timeliness of processing and payment.

17.2 Members noted the Report.

18 DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS **BSC.16.05.25**

18.1 The Finance Manager presented for information the draft 2024/25 Annual Accounts prior to submission to the Audit and Risk Committee for consideration and subsequently on to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for detailed audit.

18.2 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the payment of pension benefit to staff from the former Library Board.

18.3 The Finance Manager advised that this related to staff who retired early, this had been checked with NILGOSC, who had provided a document listing these staff.

18.4 The Head of Human Resources advised that this related to pensions for staff who had taken early retirement during the Review of Public Administration.

18.5 The Director of Business Support advised that draft accounts would go to the Audit and Risk Committee for recommendation and then to the Board.

18.6 Members noted the draft Annual Accounts.

19 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL **BSC.17.05.25**

19.1 The Chairperson presented the Report on the Use of the Common Seal of the Northern Ireland Library Authority, detailing the one occasion on which the seal had been applied between March 2025 and May 2025.

19.2 Members noted the Report.

20 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

20.1 Miss L Wilson reported that she had been invited to a consultation event for Queens Hall, Newtownards, the shared building in which the library was located.

20.2 The Director of Business Support advised that there would be a library specific consultation.

21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 25 September 2025 at 10:30am.

22 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

22.1 The meeting ended at 12.13pm.

22.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting with the following exceptions:-

- Bonnie Anley joined the meeting at 10:32am
- Ms U O'Hare jointed the meeting at 10:54am