

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held in Lisburn City Library and remotely via video link (Zoom) on Thursday 16 March 2023 at 10:30am

PRESENT

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| Councillor Cathal Mallaghan (remotely) | Chairperson |
| Professor Bernard Cullen | |
| Councillor Julie Gilmour (remotely) | |
| Ms Deirdre Kenny | |
| Mr John Peto (remotely) | Vice-Chairperson |
| Mr H Reid | |
| Dr M Ward (remotely) | |

IN ATTENDANCE

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| Mr Jim O'Hagan | Chief Executive |
| Ms Adrienne Adair | Director of Library Services |
| Mr Sean Beattie | Head of Service |
| Ms Kirsty McClelland | Service Development Manager |
| Ms Evelyn Hanna | Area Manager |
| Ms Karen Woods (remotely) | Senior Services Manager |
| Ms Jillian McFrederick (remotely) | Services Manager |
| Ms Mary McGrady | Minutes |

The Chairperson welcomed Members and staff to the meeting, in particular he welcomed Ms K McClelland, Service Development Manager and Ms E Hanna, Area Manager. He also welcomed Ms J McFrederick and Ms K Woods who were attending the meeting remotely as observers.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Ms S Millar.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Chairperson reminded Members of their obligation 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 conflicts of interest were declared.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 The Chairperson informed Members that Item 7 on the Agenda: Library Services to Rural Communities (Presentation) would be deferred due to unforeseen circumstances to a future meeting of the Committee.

4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

SC.01.03.23

- 4.1 The Director of Library Services referred to the report that had been circulated and drew attention to a number of items.

- 4.2 She informed Members that Ms K Aiken, formerly Service Development Manager had been appointed to the post of Deputy Head of Service, North and West Region. Ms Aiken had been unable to attend today's meeting but would be in attendance at the May meeting of the Committee.

- 4.3 The Director of Library Services reported that letters had been issued from the Chief Executive to the Principals of the two teaching colleges: St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College highlighting the benefits and opportunities which Libraries NI can offer and indicating that Officers would welcome the opportunity to meet with staff and students to identify ways in which Libraries NI can support new teachers and students. She also reported that a potential pilot project was being explored to extend opening hours in selected libraries to support students as they prepare for examinations in 2023.

- 4.4 The Director of Library Services drew attention to the events and activities which had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee on the 19 January 2023 as follows:

- Burns Night, 25 January 2023
- Launch of Con Auld Gallery, Holywood Library, 28 January 2023
- Give it a Go Month, February 2023
- BBC Radio 2 Book Club, 31 January 2023
- Children's Mental Health Week, 6 - 10 February 2023
- Safer Internet Day, 7 February 2023
- BBC in Lisburn Road Library: My Belfast Stories in Sound, 21 - 23 February 2023
- Cross Border Reading Group Initiative
- Health and Wellbeing Fair, Lisburn City Library, 24 February 2023
- Seamus Heaney Exhibition, Magherafelt Library, 1 - 21 March 2023
- World Book Day, 2 March 2023
- International Women's Day, 8 March 2023.

- 4.5 She also noted forthcoming events as shown below and confirmed that staff were working with the Marketing Team to promote these events widely:

- St Patrick's Day, 17 March 2023
- World Poetry Day, 21 March 2023

- Belfast Festival of Learning, 20 – 26 March 2023
- Ulster Orchestra, 29 and 30 March 2023 (various locations).

- 4.6 Ms Adair drew attention Wellhub, an online platform which provides health and wellbeing information to employees in organisations such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the four Health Trusts, Danske Bank, the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Graham Construction and the Education Authority. The estimated audience for the website is over 135,000 people and it feeds content from 42 charities, non-profit and government agencies such as Macmillan, Aware, the Public Health Agency and the Health and Safety Executive.
- 4.7 The Director of Library Services reported on a number of local programmes which support the environment and biodiversity which were being developed across Libraries NI. These included seed libraries in Antrim, Belfast Central and Killyleagh libraries, wildflower planting projects at Ormeau Road and Whiterock libraries, swift boxes at Portadown Library and community gardening clubs at Antrim and Rathcoole libraries.
- 4.8 Members noted that the Director of Library Services had attended the inaugural meeting of the Public Library Partnership Strategic Group at the British Library on 1 February 2023. This group will be a forum to bring UK national and public libraries together to ensure that libraries remain relevant, increase impact and funding opportunities and influence policy makers. Membership comprises representatives from the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales with Directors/Heads of Service from public library authorities and is chaired by the Chief Librarian of the British Library.
- 4.9 The Director of Library Services reported that seven members of staff will attend The Edge Conference which is due to be held at the end of March 2023. Further information on the Conference would be brought to Members at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 11 May 2023.
- 4.10 Ms A Adair reported on the implementation of the e3 project and outlined the benefits for customers. She confirmed that the public and Board Members would be provided with information regarding implementation.
- 4.11 The Committee Chairperson thanked Ms A Adair for her report noting the very impressive broad range of activities and events which had taken place in libraries in the two months since the last meeting.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2023 SC.02.03.23

- 5.1 On a proposal by Ms D Kenny, seconded by Mr J Peto, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 19 January 2023 were approved as a correct record of the meeting. It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting held on 9 February 2023.

6. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 The Director of Library Services reminded Members that as part of the Committee Effectiveness Review it had been agreed that Committee meetings should be held in different library venues and suggested the following:
- January meeting of the Committee to be held remotely via Zoom
 - two meetings to be held in Lisburn City Library
 - two meetings to be held in other library locations. For the next meeting in May 2023 it was suggested that it be held in Belfast Central Library and should include a tour of the library.
- 6.2 Members agreed to the suggestions as outlined above.

7. LIBRARY SERVICES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

- 7.1 As previously noted this item was deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

8. DRAFT RURAL NEEDS ANNUAL REPORT SC.03.03.23

- 8.1 The Director of Library Services introduced the Rural Needs Annual Report 2022/23 reminding Members that The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 has applied to Libraries NI since 1 June 2018. She explained that the Act requires Libraries NI 'to have due regard to rural needs when developing, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services'.
- 8.2 The Director of Library Services reported that no specific rural needs were identified in the 17 policies, strategies or plans which were subject to a Rural Needs Impact Assessment during the 2022/23 year.
- 8.3 On a proposal by Dr M Ward, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Draft Rural Needs Annual Report to the Board.

9. CUSTOMER SURVEY SC.04.03.23

- 9.1 Mr S Beattie, Head of Service, introduced the results of the Customer Survey which had been carried out between 12 September and 1 October 2022. He reminded Members that the last survey had been carried out in 2019 and that it was not possible to make direct comparisons between the surveys as the Libraries NI Customer Survey uses a 'non-probability' sample of individuals (i.e. people are not randomly selected to take part). Therefore the results only relate to those who took part in each of the surveys.
- 9.2 Mr Beattie reported that there had been an increase of 2% of adult library users who agreed that a wide variety of stock was available. He also drew attention to the response to the 'Awareness of Services' noting that only 36% of respondents

were aware that overdue charges had been removed and that nearly half of library users were unaware of the eBook offer despite numerous publicity campaigns.

- 9.3 The Head of Service informed Members that Libraries NI had a diverse user base and borrowers used a range of social media platforms, however one third of respondents did not use any of the social media channels. Although events and activities were promoted by staff, on the website and via posters the approach used to communicate with customers would be reviewed and incorporated into planning for next year.
- 9.4 In response to a question from Mr H Reid, the Director of Library Services confirmed that Members could participate in the process to review the communication to library users.
- 9.5 Ms D Kenny asked if Libraries NI had an opportunity to submit questions to the Continuous Household Survey (CHS). The Head of Service responded that Libraries NI did have an opportunity to submit questions and agreed to send Ms D Kenny the questions relating to libraries which will be used in the next CHS survey.
- 9.6 Members noted the Customer Survey and thanked Mr S Beattie for the report.

10. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT

SC.05.03.23

- 10.1 Ms K McClelland, Service Development Manager, introduced the Customer Feedback Report for the period 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022. This report provides detail on the volume of feedback received, the nature and focus of the feedback, response performance and provides examples of feedback received. It was noted that during the reporting period a total of 512 items of feedback were received, a 70% increase from the 2020/21 reporting period, and that the average response time was 3.5 days.
- 10.2 Ms K McClelland reported that Customer Feedback continued to provide a valuable point of contact with library users and is an on-going source of learning for the organisation highlighting good practice and high levels of customer service but also brings to attention aspects of the service which requires improvements.
- 10.3 Members noted the Customer Survey and thanked Ms K McClelland for the report.

11. LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE LISBURN AND CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL AREA

- 11.1 Ms E Hanna, Area Manager with responsibility for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council areas gave a presentation on the libraries within the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) area.

- 11.2 Ms E Hanna reported that there were five libraries in the LCCC area i.e. Carryduff, Dundonald, Lisburn City, Newtownbreda and Moira libraries. There is one mobile library and the council area covers both urban and rural settings. She explained that all five libraries deliver core activities such as Rhythm and Rhyme, class visits, storytime, Tea and Newspapers, Mindful Colouring, Knit and Natter and reading groups.
- 11.3 The Area Manager then went on to highlight the range of programming. These included a monthly poetry, prose and pancake event in Moira Library, a visually impaired reading group in Dundonald Library, exhibitions by the Hydebank Young Offenders Centre which have been launched in Newtownbreda Library and a Health and Wellbeing Fair in Lisburn City Library which had over 50 stands and 300 visitors on the day. In Carryduff Library there was an intergenerational project with kindness postboxes for letters and some seed planting with the local primary school and local residential home. There was also RSPB birdwatches, Ulster Scots workshops and Irish language talks.
- 11.4 Ms E Hanna spoke in detail on each of the five libraries and provided information on statistics for active users, issues and facilities within each library. She also referred to the mobile library which visits rural and outlying areas noting that it visits 26 public stops and 13 primary schools, nursery schools and playgroups. The Area Manager drew attention to the Homecall Service which delivers books to the homes of users who are unable due to ill-health or disability to visit their local library or a mobile library.
- 11.5 Members thanked Ms E Hanna for her informative presentation.
- 11.6 The Chairperson of the Board, Professor B Cullen, commended staff on the impressive work which took place in libraries. Dr M Ward referred to the development of libraries over the years and the broad range of services currently on offer other than borrowing books. The Chief Executive emphasised the importance of sustained funding for the library service to provide modern, welcoming spaces and the need to continue to publicise the services on offer as there was still a perception that libraries were just about books.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 There was no other business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would take place on Thursday 11 May 2023 at 10:30am in Belfast Central Library, and that the date had been changed due to the forthcoming Council elections. The meeting on 21 September 2023 would be held in Derry Central Library.

13.2 The Committee Chairperson noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be the final meeting for some Members. The Chief Executive reminded Members of the period of official sensitivity (purdah) that will commence in April 2023 and that communication would be issued to all Board Members in due course.

14. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

14.1 The meeting ended at 11:48pm.

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

Signed: Professor B Cullen

Date: 11 May 2023