

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on
Thursday 27 May 2021 at 10:30am via Video Link

PRESENT

Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP
Mr Neil Bodger
Professor Bernard Cullen
Councillor Cheryl Johnston
Miss Linda Wilson
Alderman Thomas Burns
Councillor Garath Keating

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson
Chairperson of the Board

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Jim O'Hagan
Mr Desi Miskelly
Mr Tim Neeson
Ms Rita McNamee
Mr Desi Curry
Ms Jacqui McKinstry

Chief Executive
Director of Business Support
Assets Manager
Finance Manager
Head of ICU/ICT
Head of Human Resources

OBSERVERS

Mr Stephen Bleakley
Ms Fiona McCallum
Ms Jennifer Stafford

Area Manager
Area Manager
Area Manager

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Ms Rachel Steenson Boardroom Apprentice.

The Chief Executive sent apologies advising that he would be late joining the meeting.

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.

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 Area Managers Stephen Bleakley, Fiona McCallum and Jennifer Stafford.
- 3.2 There was no further Chairperson's business.

4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

BSC.01.05.21

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support reported that notification of funding allocations for 2021/22 had been received. The increased resource funding allocation was a marked improvement on opening allocations in previous years and reflected work done to establish sustainable baseline funding for Libraries NI. While not addressing all the pressures within the organisation, it allowed a balanced budget to be set. More detailed information on the Resource Budget and Spending Plan would be considered under Agenda Item 8. The capital funding allocation provided for a number of infrastructure projects started in 2020/21 to be completed and some new investment projects to be progressed, more detailed information would be provided under Agenda Item 11 Resource Maintenance and Capital Development Programmed 2021/22.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021

BSC.02.05.21

- 5.1 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Councillor G Keating, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 25 March 2021, which had been submitted to the Board on 22 April 2021, were approved.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021

BSC.03.05.21

- 6.1 The Director of Business Support advised that at the March meeting Members had requested further information regarding the staff appraisal scheme and presented the Libraries NI Staff Appraisal Procedures.
- 6.2 Miss L Wilson enquired how staff performance was rated under the scheme.
- 6.3 The Director of Business Support advised that appraisal process did not contain a rating scheme per se being intended to recognise satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance only.
- 6.4 The Director of Business Support advised that following a request by Members at the March meeting he had contacted DfC to ascertain if specific funding would be made available to support the creation of Changing Places within the wider public sector, including libraries. DfC advised that while provision of

Changing Places was a priority they did not currently have any plans to open funding to the wider public sector, but this would not prohibit Libraries NI from making one off bids for individual schemes. The Assets Manager would look at current capital schemes to see if there was potential to include a Changing Place facility.

- 6.5 Mr N Bodger noted that there was funding on the capital report for a Changing Place in Strabane Library and enquired if this indicated that DfC's willingness to fund these in libraries.
- 6.6 The Director of Business Support advised that in Strabane the library and local council arts centre were adjacent, funding was initially provided to the Council for a Changing Place but this required using some of the library floor space. It proved more practical for Libraries NI to deliver this project and as a consequence DfC had reallocated funding
- 6.7 The Chairperson enquired if a program of these projects would be drawn up.
- 6.8 The Director of Business Support advised that current capital projects were being assessed to see if a changing place could be included. Then a priority program would be developed, to be ready if and when funding becomes available.

7 CAPABILITY POLICY REVIEW

BSC.04.05.21

- 7.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the revised Capability Policy.
- 7.2 Miss L Wilson enquired how this policy sat alongside the staff appraisal scheme.
- 7.3 The Head of Human Resources advised that the policy was intended to be broader, allowing managers to pick up on issues of performance rather than wait for the annual review.
- 7.4 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the revised Capability Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for approval.

8 2021/22 RESOURCE BUDGET AND SPENDING PLAN BSC.05.05.21

- 8.1 The Director of Business Support presented the 2021/22 Resource Budget and Spending Plan, advising that the improved opening allocation for 2021/22 was an increase on previous years, reflected work between Libraries NI and DfC aimed at establishing a realistic and sustainable level of funding for the public library service.
- 8.2 Councillor G Keating commented that a lot of hard work had been done by the Director, the Chairperson of the Board and others in engaging with DfC and thanked them for their efforts to secure the budget allocation which provides a sure footing.

- 8.3 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the 2021/22 Resource Budget and Spending Plan was approved and recommended to the Board for approval.

9 BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICE PLAN 2021/22 BSC.06.05.21

- 9.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Business Support Service Plan 2021/22, advised that progress would be monitored and an update provided to the Committee mid-year.
- 9.2 Mr N Bodger commented that while there was a considerable amount of euphoria regarding going back to normal, the longer effect of COVID 19 was unknown and it would be worth looking at the types of services which could be provided going forward and the impacts of demographic population shifts from urban to rural.
- 9.3 The Director of Business Support advised that Libraries NI would continue to pursue a more sustainable funding model for the Organisation, monitor demand for resuming services along with the demand for new services which had been introduced during lockdown.
- 9.4 The Chief Executive agreed that Libraries NI needed to be alert to the uncertainty of the economic position and advised that greater recognition was emerging of the role organisations such as Libraries NI can play in collaborating and contributing to societal recovery. The demographic shift from urban to rural had been discussed with DfC.
- 9.5 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Councillor G Keating, the Business Support Service Plan 2021/22 was approved and recommended to the Board for approval.

10 BUSINESS SUPPORT RISK REGISTER 2021/22 BSC.07.05.21

- 10.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Business Support Risk Register 2021/22, noting that overall the level of risk was slightly reduced, this was a live document subject to review.
- 10.2 On a proposal by Mr N Bodger, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Business Support Risk Register 2021/22 was approved and recommended to the Board for approval.

11 RESOURCE MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2021/22 BSC.08.05.21

- 11.1 The Assets Manager presented the Resource Maintenance and Capital Development Programme detailing the activities and areas of expenditure planned for 2021/22.

11. On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mr N Bodger, the Resource Maintenance and Capital Development Programme 2021/22 was approved and recommended to the Board for approval.

**12 INFORMATION e3 PROGRAMME UPDATE BSC.09.05.21
REPORT**

12. The Head of ICU/ICT presented the Information e3 Programme Update Report providing an update on progress on the Information Systems e3 Extension and Refresh and the e3 programme.

12. Members noted the report.

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13 FINANCE REPORTS

Resource Expenditure Report to April 2021 BSC.10.05.21A

13. The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure Report, advising that it was too early in the year to identify any meaningful trends as yet, particularly with the current uncertainty surrounding a return to more normal service delivery.

13. Members noted the report.

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13. Capital Expenditure Report To April 2021 BSC.10.05.21B

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13. The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report to 30 April 2021.

13. Members noted the report.

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14 PROCUREMENT REPORT BSC.11.05.21

**Tenders over £1,000 and Single Tender Actions
over £1,000**

14. The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report.

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14. Members noted the report.

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14. Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the significant costs relating to the ebook supply contract.

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14. The Director of Business Support advised that this represented the potential maximum expenditure and actual expenditure remained dependant on funding availability.

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14. The Chairperson noted that the Belfast Telegraph online was no longer available.

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14. The Director of Business Support advised that this is was due to a commercial
6 decision by the Belfast Telegraph Group to no longer make this available.

15 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO APRIL 2021 BSC.12.05.21

15. The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report to
1 April 2021, noting the continuing reduction in overall absence rates and
increase in zero absences, to date. The Key Performance Indicator target for
2021/22 being to maintain overall sickness absence levels at or below 9.50
FTE days

15. Mr N Bodger enquired if the number of incidents and days off for the top five
2 absence reasons, were monitored for trends. The psychiatric illness
breakdown indicated a reduction in work related causes but an increase in
family related issues, which would require monitoring.

15. The Director of Business Support advised that monitoring was done, that there
3 had not been a significant change in the figures relating to the top five absence
reasons. The overall reduction had largely come from the short and medium
term illnesses.

15. The Head of Human Resources advised that staff who are suffering from
4 psychiatric illness were engaged with.

15. The Chief Executive advised that Covid mitigation measures had contributed
5 to the reduction in absence due to seasonal colds and flu and this had also
been seen at a national level.

15. Members noted the report.

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**16 PROMPT PAYMENT TARGET AND BSC.13.05.21
PERFORMANCE 2020/21**

16. The Finance Manager presented the report on Prompt Payment Target and
1 Performance 2020/21, updated the Committee on performance against the
Prompt Payment of Invoices Performance Indicators for 2020/21.

16. Members noted the report.

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**17 ANNUAL BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE BSC.14.05.21
WORK PLAN 2021/22**

17. The Director of Business Support presented the Annual Business Support
1 Committee Work Plan informing Members of meeting dates and proposed
business items to be considered throughout 2021/22. The possibility of a
hybrid approach to future meetings was being investigated, this would allow
Members to attend virtually or in person.

17. The Chairperson commented that the hybrid approach saved money, reduced
2 travel and benefited the environment and should be considered.

17. Members noted the work plan.

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18 REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIY 2021/22 BSC.15.05.21

18. The Finance Manager presented the report providing an overview of the procurement of goods and services during 2020/21.

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18. Members noted the report.

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19 DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2020/21 BSC.16.05.21

19. The Finance Manager presented the draft Annual Accounts 2020/21.

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19. Members noted the draft Annual Accounts.

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20 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL BSC.17.05.21

20. The Chairperson advised that the Common Seal had been applied once between March 2021 and May 2021.

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20. Members noted the report.

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21 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

21. The Director of Business Support thanked Gillian Clarke for the administrative work for the Committee.

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22 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

22. Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 30 September 2021 at 10:30am.

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23 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

23. The meeting ended at 12:05pm.

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23. All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the following exceptions:

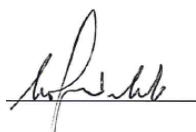
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Councillor C Johnston joined the meeting at 10:34am

The Chief Executive joined the meeting at 10:49am

Professor B Cullen left the meeting at 11:55am

Signed



Dated: 30 September 2021

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 30 September 2021, are published with an e-signature