

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 30 January 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
Councillor Roisin Lynch (IP)	
Councillor Julie Gilmour (IP)	
Ms Bonnie Anley (IP)	Chairperson of Libraries NI Board

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

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Ms Ursula O'Hare and Mr Desi Curry

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 advised that at the December 2024 Board meeting it had been agreed that Mrs W Osborne would step down from the Business Support Committee and be appointed to the Services Committee. Mrs Osborne contribution as a very active member of the Committee was

much appreciated. The Board had also agreed that Councillor J Gilmour would be appointed as a permanent member of the Business Support Committee. These changes were effective immediately and Councillor Gilmour was welcomed to the Committee. The current members of the Committee were:-

Miss Linda Wilson, Chairperson

Councillor Martin McRandal, Vice-Chairperson

Councillor Roisin Lynch

Councillor Julie Gilmour

Ms Ursula O'Hare

Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson of Libraries NI Board.

4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

BSC.01.01.25

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support reported that following the red weather warning being issued and advice received the service was closed on 24 January 2025 because of storm Eowyn, staff who could have worked remotely. A large number of libraries were affected by power outages, all but two libraries had power restored by Saturday 25 January 2025. Several libraries had suffered storm damage, mostly relatively minor damage, Cloughfern Library was the worst affected with damage to its roof. The cost of storm damage across the estate was currently estimated at £42,000 and DfC had been advised of this. It was noted that in line with government practice the majority of library properties did not carry specific property damage insurances.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive advised that throughout Saturday there had been a lot of staff on the ground monitoring, providing updates, and engaging with DfC. There had been communications advising that libraries were open again. No additional cost had been incurred, but staff had gone above and beyond and should be commended.
- 4.3 The Director of Business Support reported that following the NI Executive draft budget 2025/26 it was expected that each department would take forward its own consultation process. Prior to this process a paper had been drafted, Resourcing The Public Library Service, to evidence the impact of historic funding, Libraries NI's statutory responsibilities and to set out the case for sustainable funding, this paper had been circulated to Members and forwarded to DfC for consideration.
- 4.4 Councillor R Lynch welcomed the report, which was very useful, very easily read for a non-financial person and clearly laid out requirements before DfC.
- 4.5 Councillor M McRandal noted that under Impacts (Workforce Resources) the Report stated that staff development had stagnated with few opportunities for advancement or development arising and enquired how this related to the reduction in staff numbers.

- 4.6 The Director of Business Support advised that there were fewer opportunities arising from the normal internal movement of staff, less staff availing of promotional opportunities and that in general the core of staff that remained were very settled and less likely to change roles.

Ms B Anley joined the meeting at 10:46am

- 4.7 Miss L Wilson commented that the point should be made that under the original business plan for Libraries NI sterling efforts had been made to realise savings by merging five boards.
- 4.8 The Director of Business Support noted the point and advised that this paper would be presented to the Board giving Members an opportunity to peruse and provide feedback.
- 4.9 Members noted the Report.

5 THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2024 BSC.02.01.25

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Miss L Wilson the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 28 November 2024, were approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to the following amendments:

- at 6.3 Vice-Person should read Vice Chairperson
- at 7.7 remove 'want to'
- at 10.14 change 'drawn' to 'drawn up'.

It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting on 12 December 2024.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2024 BSC.03.01.25

- 6.1 The Director of Business Support advised that there were three matters arising from the minutes of the November 2024 meeting. The Committee/ Board Effectiveness Review would be addressed under Agenda Item 7 and the Disposal of the Former Dunmurry Library Property would be addressed under Agenda Item 9. Following discussion at the November meeting the Chief Executive had advised that a road map and action plan would be drawn up for the two areas of Staff Appraisal and Health and Wellbeing, with a specific focus on how performance should improve. A report detailing actions to be taken had been circulated to Members.

- 6.2 Miss L Wilson commented that the Committee had previously had robust discussion around these areas and had expressed concerns about progress and best practice.
- 6.3 Councillor M McRandal commented that buy in from line managers was going to be key. Staff appraisal processes had been interrupted and enquired how they had been viewed previously, also would the staff appraisal and health and wellbeing initiatives help with sickness absence?
- 6.4 The Head of Human Resources advised that since 2020 appraisals had been interrupted by Covid and industrial action, prior to that the HR Department had found them effective, but she was unsure if frontline staff now fully understood their importance. Going forward there would be more active monitoring, completed documents would be reviewed and advice and support provided if necessary. Appraisals and health and wellbeing initiatives support staff to feel valued and comfortable to discuss issues with their manager if they feel stressed and reduce absenteeism.
- 6.5 The Director of Business Support advised that for some staff their appraisal may be the only annual sit down with their manager and it was important to make time for this.
- 6.6 The Head of Human Resources advised that sometimes managers have to react to circumstances but need to keep a focus and reschedule appraisals as necessary. It was also important that if there are issues these should be dealt with and not left to fester until the appraisal to be dealt with. There should be two-way communication, appraisals should be followed up on, and Health and Wellbeing could provide advice if needed.
- 6.7 Ms B Anley enquired if the appraisal could provide some uniform feedback, if a question could be included that would give the employees a platform to feedback subject to GDPR.
- 6.8 The Head of Human Resources advised that the survey as part of the proposed Health and Wellbeing Strategy would provide feedback and that she would look at incorporating a question into the appraisal documentation.
- 6.9 The Chief Executive commented that a holistic view was needed, and he would be wary of trying to do too many things in too many places.
- 6.10 Councillor R Lynch welcomed the report, was excited that there was an HR package to help drive and keep the process moving and enquired if there was significant budget provision?
- 6.11 The Director of Business Support reported that as yet no outcome regarding a budget for 2025/26, the aim would be to provide the HR Team

- with sufficient resources to take this forward but that there may be challenges around priorities at times.
- 6.12 The Chief Executive commented that the Organisation could not afford to not re-invigorate these processes.
 - 6.13 The Head of Human Resources reported that there were a lot of free training resources which had been availed of, including training through The Equality Commission and LRA; this would need to be rolled out further and she was keen to provide customer care/service training for frontline staff.
 - 6.14 Miss L Wilson commented that staff appraisals were relatively straightforward in terms of completion, but the challenge would be the cultural change required to see improved quality and get buy in from managers across the Organisation. This would require a lot of communication, was there a high level communication plan?
 - 6.15 The Head of Human Resources advised that it would be important for Senior Leadership Group to understand and champion this, communications would be issued throughout February and March, HR had capacity to attend meetings and would also communicate through "In The Know" the staff newsletter.
 - 6.16 The Director of Business Support advised that it was anticipated that there would be escalating communication with staff to get the process up and running, the online system for managing the process was already in place.
 - 6.17 Ms B Anley enquired if the Committee would be provided with progress against the plan by June.
 - 6.18 The Head of Human Resources confirmed that progress would be reported to the Committee.

7 COMMITTEE/ BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2024 **BSC.04.01.25**

- 7.1 The Director of Business Support reported that the annual Board and Committee Effectiveness Review had commenced, the draft report and any action plan arising would need to be brought to the Board on 13 February 2025 to meet the reporting timeframe. Consequently the Committee were asked to:-
 - 1. consider the current Scheme of Delegation, confirm that it remained relevant and appropriate or advise of revisions
 - 2. consider the draft Effectiveness Review with a view to agreeing a combined response representative of the view of the Committee,

identifying any actions to be brought forward for inclusion in the Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan.

The Scheme of Delegation had been redrafted to reflect discussions at the November 2024 Committee meeting. The Effectiveness Review had been updated and circulated with suggested updates/revisions and amendments highlighted in blue font.

- 7.2 Miss L Wilson thanked the Director of Business Support for reviewing the Effectiveness Review and asked if it was appropriate to comment on DfC staffing structures at number 4.
- 7.3 The Chief Executive reported that there had been a restructure within DfC, the sponsorship and policy function had been separated.
- 7.4 Ms B Anley suggested that the words “combined with restructure within DfC” be added.
- 7.5 Miss L Wilson noted that at 8 the review says, “this action has not been fully addressed and remains outstanding”; as a number of documents had been circulated to Members it was suggested that this be amended to “this action could be progressed further”.
- 7.6 Ms B Anley commented that she didn’t see any reference to budget and the link between this and effectiveness.
- 7.7 Councillor J Gilmour advised that number 9 addressed the link between the budget and effectiveness.
- 7.8 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the updated Scheme of Delegation and the 2024/25 Business Support Committee Effectiveness Review Report were approved subject to the amended wording at points 4 and 8.

8 POLICIES (SCHEDULED REVIEWS)

8.1 HYBRID WORKING POLICY BSC.05.01.25

- 8.2 The Head of Human Resources presented the Hybrid Working Policy which had been reviewed in keeping with best practice, the contents of the Policy and associated equality screening and rural needs impact assessments had been reviewed. The policy was considered to remain fit for purpose however the opportunity has been taken to make minor revisions to update terminology and references. The policy had been reviewed in consultation with Trade Union representatives of the Libraries NI Negotiating

Committee. Proposed updates were highlighted in blue font and the Hybrid Working Procedures and Hybrid Working Guidelines would be added to the list of Related Documents.

- 8.3 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Ms B Anley, the reviewed Hybrid Working Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

8.4 POLICY ON THE CODE OF PROCEDURES ON RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION BSC.06.01.25

- 8.5 The Head of Human Resources presented the Policy on the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection, which had been reviewed in keeping with best practice, the contents of the Policy and associated equality screening and rural needs impact assessments had been reviewed. The policy was, in general, considered to remain fit for purpose however the opportunity has been taken to make minor revisions to update terminology and references. Its purpose was to define, as clearly as possible, the basis on which Libraries NI will seek to make appointments with the aim of ensuring that the most suitable person is appointed to the post.

- 8.6 Councillor J Gilmore queried the drafting of point 4.2.

- 8.7 The Head of Human Resources advised that 4.2 should read “will normally be internally advertised”. The Recruitment and Selection Procedures were also being reviewed.

- 8.8 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Policy on the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption, subject to amendment at 4.2.

9 DISPOSAL OF FORMER DUNMURRY LIBRARY PROPERTY BSC.07.01.25

- 9.1 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 (19-21 Upper Dunmurry Lane, Belfast) was closed in June 2010 and the property subsequently declared surplus. A number of factors had delayed the disposal of the surplus property however these had now been resolved and Libraries NI was now in a position to bring the property to market. At the November 2024 Business Support Committee meeting Members had considered the proposal and requested clarification as to whether obtaining outline planning permission ahead of the marketing of the property would impact on the potential market value of the property. The Assets Manager had subsequently researched the potential market value of the former Dunmurry Library property and circulated a report confirming the LPS valuation approach and that there was no significant potential benefit to the

public sector vendors (Libraries NI or the South Eastern Heath Trust) in speculatively submitting a planning application for residential development ahead of marketing the property.

- 9.2 Ms B Anley enquired if there was any disadvantage in waiting and submitting an outline planning application.
- 9.3 The Director of Business Support advised that as a joint user property, between Libraries NI and the health trust, this was a complex transaction and that Libraries NI wouldn't want to delay the process further.
- 9.4 The Chief Executive advised that despite any reservations the Organisation was obliged to use LPS.
- 9.5 Ms B Anley advised that her concern was the perception that Libraries NI hadn't maximized the value of this site.
- 9.6 The Director of Business Support advised that he was content that the LPS valuation had taken consideration of the potential market value with planning permission; a claw back clause could be considered and had previously been used.
- 9.7 Ms B Anley commented that a claw back clause would be useful to mitigate the risk and enquired regarding the timing of this sale.
- 9.8 Councillor J Gilmore enquired if Libraries NI would receive the proceeds of the sale of the property.
- 9.9 The Director of Business Support advised that the property would be marketed in the new financial year. DfC would be advised of the likely income from this sale and approval sought to market the property. The income from the sale would subsequently be offered to DfC who would decide if it were to be reallocated back to Libraries NI.
- 9.10 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the proposal to proceed with the disposal of the former Dunmurry Library property was approved and recommended to the Board.

10 LESSONS LEARNED – BRITISH LIBRARY CYBER ATTACK BSC.08.01.25

- 10.1 The Director of Business Support reported that following discussions at the December 2024 Board meeting members had requested that Libraries NI consider the 'lessons learned' by the British Library as a result of its 2023 cyber attack and review and report on the Libraries NI position in regard to cyber security. A Report had been circulated which considered each of the British Library lessons as they may apply to Libraries NI and provided an 'at

a glance' RAG status indicator reflecting the assessment of compliance alongside explanatory commentary.

- 10.2 Ms B Anley enquired regarding disaster recovery, how much were the British Library able to recover and what would Libraries NI do in this situation. At number 6 should there be a red status because of data breach. If Libraries NI had a data breach which had to be reported to the ICO there would be a reputational risk; should there be an appendix to consider data protection?
- 10.3 The Director of Business Support advised that as he understood it recovery had a number of aspects, and the nature of the British Library attack meant that even though some data could be recovered control of data removed from their systems could not be regained.
- 10.4 Councillor J Gilmore advised that regularly training all staff in evolving risks would be important.
- 10.5 The Director of Business Support commented that although libraries were in a better position than a lot of organisations because of the recent large investment in IT systems, we needed to keep constantly vigilant. This was a very fast moving and changing area, there was cyber security activity going on in Libraries NI every day, and the response had to be dynamic.
- 10.6 Councillor M McRandal noted that lesson 11 was cyber risk awareness and expertise at senior level and advised that the Board would need to clarify that they had this expertise. Could Mr Adrian Driscoll provide this expertise?
- 10.7 Ms B Anley suggested that Councillor Gareth Sharvin may also have these skills.
- 10.8 The Director of Business Support advised that this was a matter for the Board to consider, and there were Board Members who had knowledge in this area.
- 10.9 Ms B Anley enquired if there was an existing policy which covered the approach of a public sector organisation in response to a cyber attack and ransom demand.
- 10.10 The Chief Executive expected that there was a UK government policy on this.
- 10.11 Miss L Wilson noted the Disaster Recovery testing proposal and enquired if this was being captured as a risk?
- 10.12 The Director of Business Support advised that this was included in the e3 Risk Register, which goes through the Project Board, but it not in the Corporate Risk Register.

- 10.13 Miss L Wilson commented that this should be included in the Corporate Risk Register.
- 10.14 The Director of Business Support advised that he would look at this.
- 10.15 Members noted the Report.

11 INFORMATION SYSTEMS e3 PROGRAMME UPDATE BSC.09.01.25 REPORT JANUARY 2025

- 11.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Information Systems e3 Programme Update Report January 2025, advising that work was continuing within timescales and cost parameters. Work to complete the move to Azure Public Cloud was coming to an end and a hardware refresh would be rolled out in the next few months.
- 11.2 Councillor M McRandal commented that the project had run smoothly, timely and within budget, and thanked the Director of Business Support and all involved in this.
- 11.3 Members noted the Report.

12 FINANCE REPORTS

12.1 RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO BSC.10.01.25 DECEMBER 2024

- 12.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure Report detailing the results for the nine months to December 2024. In December all budget managers had reviewed their resourcing demands and delivery plans and updated their budgets for the final three months accordingly.

- 12.3 Members noted the Report.

12.4 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO BSC.11.01.25 DECEMBER 2024

- 12.5 The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report detailing expenditure to 31 December 2024 against the current budget allocation.
- 12.6 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the projected underspend.
- 12.7 The Director of Business Support reported that the current underspend projection was a point of a percentage of the total allocation.
- 12.8 Ms B Anley commented that it was good to note that the design team were engaged for Enniskillen and enquired if the Board would see a potential

design this year and would the architects who worked on Fivemiletown Library work on this project?

- 12.9 The Assets Manager advised that a paper had gone to the Board when the project was taken to pre-tender stage. This project was being undertaken by Hamilton Architects.
- 12.10 The Chief Executive advised that the drawings had been on display when the Minister visited Enniskillen.
- 12.11 Councillor J Gilmour enquired which of the new EnerPHit technologies would be included in the Enniskillen Library project, commenting that it was less expensive to build these technologies in rather than retrofitting them.
- 12.12 The Director of Business Support advised that the Organisation considered energy efficiency, sustainability and environmental impact for all new projects, how far this can be applied depended on cost, funding and DfC's view of affordable.
- 12.13 Members noted the Report.

**13. PROCUREMENT REPORT – TENDERS OVER £1,000 BSC.12.01.25
AND SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000**

- 13.1 The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report detailing procurements over £1,000 and Single Tender Actions for the period from 19 November 2024 to 17 January 2025.
- 13.2 Miss L Wilson noted procurement for a children's wellbeing session and provision of educational support and commented that these activities may be outside of the libraries core function. She noted three procurements for Whiterock Library and enquired how equity across the service was managed.
- 13.3 The Finance Manager advised that these would have been submitted as business cases and been approved in terms of library objectives.
- 13.4 The Director of Business Support commented providing educational support was linked to Whiterock becoming a focused children's library, the bigger picture was to engage children and inform local schools, rather than to dip into education. Senior managers took a holistic view across the service against the overall budget, then at a local level managers bring forward proposals.
- 13.5 The Chief Executive advised that Whiterock was a large library with a large population to serve and a very low level of engagement, it was decided to make Whiterock children focused. A number of initiatives had been organised to engage with the children in Whiterock, and DfC had visited the library.

13.6 Members noted the Report.

14 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO DECEMBER 2024 BSC.13.01.25

14.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report which provided sickness absence statistics to 31 December 2024. The performance target set for the 2024/25 year was to maintain sickness absence (composite average Full Time Equivalent days lost) at or below 10.5 days by 31 March 2025. The current absence rate was 13.08 FTE days.

14.2 Councillor M McRandal enquired regarding entitlement to occupational sick pay and commented that genuinely ill staff should be supported.

14.3 The Head of Human Resources advised that staff with five years' service were entitled to six months full pay followed by six months half pay, for staff with less than five years' service entitlement varied depending on their service.

14.4 Members noted the Report.

15 REPORT(S) ON THE OUTCOMES OF PROCUREMENT EXERCISES

15.1 GARVAGH LIBRARY – APPOINTMENT OF DESIGN TEAM (LOW CARBON RETROFIT/ REFURBISHMENT) BSC.14.01.25

15.2 The Assets Manager presented the Tender Report for the appointment of a professional design team to provide development and design team services in relation to the proposed Garvagh Library Refurbishment and Carbon Retrofitting Works Project.

15.3 Members noted the Report.

15.4 DUNDONALD LIBRARY – APPOINTMENT OF DESIGN TEAM (LOW CARBON RETROFIT/ REFURBISHMENT) BSC.15.01.25

15.5 The Assets Manager presented the Tender Report for the appointment of a professional design team to provide development and design team services in relation to the proposed Dundonald Library Refurbishment and Carbon Retrofitting Works Project.

15.6 Councillor R Lynch enquired if the companies had been notified of the outcome of the tender process.

- 15.7 The Assets Manager confirmed that the companies had been advised of the outcome.
- 15.8 Ms B Anley enquired if there was grant funding for the carbon retrofitting works to achieve EnerPHit standard.
- 15.9 The Director of Business Support advised that it was anticipated the funding scheme would open for bids in April 2025 and a bid would be submitted.
- 15.10 Members noted the Report.

16 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

- 16.1 There was no other notified business.

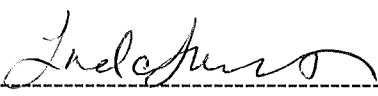
17 DATE OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

- 17.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 27 March 2025 at 10:30am.

18 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 18.1 The meeting ended at 13:00
- 18.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting with the following exception:-

- *Ms B Anley joined the meeting at 10:46am*

Signed 

Dated *27th March 2025*