

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Antrim Library
on Thursday 13 February 2025 at 10:30 am

PRESENT

(IP) Ms Bonnie Anley	Chairperson
(IP) Councillor Julie Gilmour	Vice Chairperson

(IP) Councillor Alistair Cathcart
(IP) Mr Adrian Driscoll
(IP) Councillor Rosie Kinnear
(IP) Councillor Roisin Lynch
(IP) Councillor Andrew McAuley
(IP) Councillor Martin McRandal
(IP) Ms Ursula O'Hare
(IP) Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE
(IP) Councillor Gareth Sharvin

IN ATTENDANCE

(IP) Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
(IP) Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
(IP) Mr Desi Miskelly	Director of Business Support

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Mr John Peto
Miss Linda Wilson

Mrs Margaret Bell, Head of Service, North and West welcomed everyone to Antrim Library for the Board Meeting. She informed Members that a tour of the library had been arranged for Members after the Board Meeting.

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.

Councillor A Cathcart and Councillor M McRandal declared a conflict of interest in respect of a matter discussed at Agenda Item 10: Management Report.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 The Chairperson reported that together with the Chief Executive she had met with the Chinese Consulate General Mr Li Nan on 13 January 2025 and attended an event to celebrate the Chinese New Year at the Chinese Consulate on 22 January 2025. She also reported that she had sent a letter of thanks to Mr Li Nan on 15 January 2025 thanking him for the meeting, the invitation to the Chinese New Year event and the gifts of Chinese tea.
- 3.2 The Chairperson referred to the meeting with the DfC Minister, Mr G Lyons held on 13 January 2025 which she had attended with the Libraries NI Senior Management Team. She reported that the meeting had been positive and a number of matters had been discussed including the Public Library Policy, the budget requirement for 2025/26 and the current year resource and capital budgets. The Minister had stated that he was looking forward to the official re-opening of Fivemiletown Library on 19 February 2025. She added that following the meeting a document highlighting positive feedback from library users had been sent to the Minister on 6 February 2025.

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:
- Partnership Agreements – Light Touch Review
 - Fivemiletown Library Official Opening – 19 February 2025
 - Storm Éowyn
 - Chinese Consulate General
 - Meeting with Minister, 13 January 2025
 - Libraries NI Draft Corporate Plan 2025 - 30
 - Libraries NI Annual Business Plan 2025/26
 - Assembly Questions
- 4.2 The Chief Executive drew attention to the official opening of Fivemiletown Library on 19 February 2025 and encouraged as many Members as possible to attend.
- 4.3 The Chief Executive commended library staff and managers and in particular Duty Managers and the Assets Team for their response to Storm Éowyn. The Chairperson on behalf of Members thanked staff for their efforts to aid people who had been affected by the storm. Councillor A Cathcart in his role as Mayor of Ards and North Down Borough Council and as a Board Member also thanked library staff for their efforts adding that it highlighted the importance that libraries play in providing support to their local community.

4.4 The Chief Executive thanked those Members who had met with the Corporate Plan Working Group on 30 January 2025 to review the latest changes and updates made to the Libraries NI Draft Corporate Plan 2025-30. The Chairperson invited some members who had attended the meeting to provide feedback. Mrs W Osborne reported that she found the meeting helpful and that she sensed that there was organisation wide ownership of the document and also strategic ownership by the Board. Councillor G Sharvin reported that the aim of the meeting was to make the document visually accessible and he felt the meeting was useful and that officers had taken the feedback from Members on board. The Chairperson asked that it be noted that Members were pleased that progress was being made on the Corporate Plan. The Chief Executive reported that a number of further changes will be incorporated into the latest version of the Corporate Plan and the Marketing and Communications team would then be asked to begin work on producing a version of the Plan for presentation to the Board at the meeting on 17 April 2025, at which point more information on the Public Library Policy should be known.

4.5 The Chief Executive reminded the Board of the need to progress the Annual Business Plan 2025/26 proposing that it should be based on the priorities, themes and corporate goals included in the draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 30 which he agreed to circulate to Board Members for information. He added that a degree of sequencing with regard to the approvals for both documents, including co-ordination to take account of the timing of the publication of a new Public Library Policy would be required.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2024
LNI 01.02.25

5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor A McAuley, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 12 December 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2024
LNI 02.02.25

6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting that an update would be provided on all matters arising except for those which were on the agenda for further discussion.

Item 4.2: Chief Executive's Business

6.2 The Chief Executive referred to the discussion in relation to the cyber-attack at the British Library and confirmed that a Commercial in Confidence report had been presented to the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 30 January 2025. At that meeting the Committee had discussed the report and considered each of the 'lessons learned' as they might apply to Libraries NI providing an indication of compliance and explanatory commentary. A copy of the report was made available to Members.

- 6.3 Members noted the lessons learned from the British Library experience and how these could be applied in Libraries NI to raise awareness, provide Board members with appropriate training and strengthen disaster recovery and cyber security processes. The Chairperson proposed that as Councillor G Sharvin and Mr A Driscoll had specific knowledge of the subject area, they should liaise directly with the Chief Executive and Director of Business Support to develop next steps.

Item 7.4: Committee / Board Effectiveness Review 2024

- 6.4 Members noted that this item had been completed and a summary of feedback from Board Members on the Public Library Policy presentation had been forwarded to DfC on 16 January 2025.

Item 8.1: Board Effectiveness 2024/25

- 6.5 This item has also been completed and the draft Board Effectiveness Checklist and Action Plan is presented for approval at Agenda Item 9.

7. UPDATE ON 2025/26 BUDGETING PROCESS LNI 03.02.25

- 7.1 The Director of Business Support reminded Members that the Northern Ireland Executive had published a draft Budget for 2025/26 in mid-December 2024 followed by a public consultation exercise which was scheduled to close on 13 March 2025. While DfC had not yet commenced a consultation exercise Officers had engaged with the Department to provide evidence and information in support of a realistic and sustainable level of resource/capital funding for 2025/26. A paper 'Resourcing the Public Library Service 2025' was provided to DfC in early January 2025 which set out a 2025/26 Funding Scenario, Officers have been informed that the Department are actively considering the case put forward in the resourcing paper and in the context of the budget 2025/26 exercise.
- 7.2 The Director of Business Support also reported that he was aware of a renewed emphasis being placed on the requirement to end the financial year with the resource budget being fully utilised and that any significant underspending may impact on the funding allocation for 2025/26.

8. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT LNI 04.02.25

- 8.1 The Chairperson, Ms B Anley presented the Remuneration Committee Effectiveness Review Report for 2024/25 which had been carried out at the meeting of the Committee held on 4 February 2025.
- 8.2 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor A McAuley, the Board approved the Effectiveness Review Report 2024/25 of the Remuneration Committee

9. BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2024/25

LNI 05.02.25

- 9.1 The Chief Executive informed Members that individual Committees had reviewed their effectiveness, including the continued relevance of the Schemes of Delegation. The review papers were appended to the minutes of the meetings at which the review was undertaken.
- 9.2 Members noted that at its meeting on 15 January 2025, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had completed an effectiveness review using the effectiveness questionnaire produced by the National Audit Office (NAO). This evaluation contains 80 'Essential' questions and 99 'Good Practice' questions. In line with the NAO's recommended approach, all 'Essential' questions were considered and in addition, the 'Good Practice' questions in Part 3: Roles and Responsibilities were also considered.
- 9.3 Members considered the Effectiveness Review and draft Action Plan. It was noted that the Effectiveness Review would be amended to correct a typographical error at Question 2.
- 9.4 The Chairperson reminded Members that an external review of Board Effectiveness is due to take place once every three years and as the last review took place in July 2021 this process is due to be carried out in 2025. She confirmed that she would write to Mr I Greenway, DfC to agree the approach for this review and for it to take place during the 2025 calendar year.
- 9.5 On a proposal by the Chairperson, Ms B Anley, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, Members confirmed that they are content that all Committee reviews had been completed, agreed the draft Action Plan and concluded the review of effectiveness by confirming it is content that the Board and its Committees were operating effectively.

10. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 06.02.25

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

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2024/25: Quarter 3: October – December 2024

LNI 06.02.25 (i)

- 10.2 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Report for Quarter 3: October to December 2024. He explained that at the end of Quarter 3 progress continued to be made in respect of the achievement of KPIs. He noted that the Quarter 3 position showed that the sickness absence target is currently not being achieved. Six KPIs are shown as 'Amber' and it is uncertain if they will reach their target by the end of the financial year. All other KPIs are recorded as on track for achievement.

- Finance Report: December 2024 LNI 06.02.25 (ii)
- 10.3 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to December 2024 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 30 January 2025.
- 10.4 He drew attention to the Resource Report noting that an underspend of £180,000 (0.5%) had been projected as at December 2024. Since then, funding has been reallocated to the stock budget and the revised projected underspend was currently negligible. Any further easements which materialised over the next few would be treated in a similar manner.
- 10.5 He then drew attention to the Capital Report noting that an underspend of £17,000 (0.4%) was projected as at the end of December 2024. He added that it was expected that this variance would be eliminated through the easement/pressure bid process with the Department.
- 10.6 The Chairperson thanked the Director of Business Support for his work to ensure all budgets were fully spent by year end.
- 10.7 The Chairperson enquired about the current position regarding Newtownards Library. Officers reported that the Business Case was with the departmental economists for consideration and that ongoing engagement with the department was taking place. The Chairperson asked that the Chief Executive take this matter forward. Councillor A Cathcart and Councillor M McRandal reminded the Board that they were Councillors elected to Ards and North Down Borough Council and declared a conflict of interest regarding this project. In order to better inform Members of proposed capital development proposals it was agreed that the Asset Management Plan and Strategy, which is due to be updated, will be brought to a future meeting of the Board via the Business Support Committee.
- Corporate Risk Register LNI 06.02.25 (iii)
- 10.8 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 15 January 2025. He noted that there had been very little change since last seen by Members except for Risk 5: Resources, which had been updated to reflect the additional resource and capital funding received as a result of the October 2024 and January 2025 monitoring rounds.
- 10.9 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at January 2025.
- 11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2025** **LNI 07.02.25**
- 11.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025. She informed the Board that the terms of appointment for both herself and the

Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor A Cathcart had been extended for a further year until January 2026.

- 11.2 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, seconded by Councillor G Sharvin, the draft minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 15 January 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 11.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board approved and adopted the following:
- Amendment to the Internal Audit Annual Plan
 - Conflicts of Interest Policy Review
 - Code of Conduct for Board Members Review
 - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Effectiveness Review to include an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation
- 11.4 It was noted that the Scheme of Delegation for the Committee had been amended to reflect the status of the Chairperson of the Board on the Committee being changed from member to attendee in line with the updated HMT Audit and Risk Assurance Handbook (July 2024).
- 11.5 The Committee Chairperson referred to a discussion at the meeting regarding the completion of a Self-Assessment Checklist to review the effectiveness of the Committee. At present the Committee completes the NAO checklist but the Revised HMT Handbook also includes a Checklist. She reported that she had attended a meeting of the Department's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee recently at which it was confirmed that no benchmark existed for the review of Committee Effectiveness and either of the Effectiveness Review Checklists could be completed.
- 11.6 Members congratulated the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Councillor A Cathcart on his recent marriage and wished him well for the future.

**12. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON
16 JANUARY 2025 LNI 08.02.25**

- 12.1 In the absence of the Chairperson of the Committee, Mr J Peto, the Vice-Chairperson, Councillor A McAuley presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025.
- 12.2 On a proposal by the Committee Vice-Chairperson, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the draft minutes of the Services Committee held on 16 January 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 12.3 On a proposal by the Committee Vice-Chairperson, seconded by the Board Chairperson Ms B Anley, the Board approved and adopted the Review of Effectiveness of Services Committee 2024/25.

- 12.4 On a proposal by Committee Vice-Chairperson, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, the Board approved and adopted the Review of Filming Policy.

13. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEES HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2025 LNI 09.02.25

- 13.1 In the absence of the Chairperson of the Committee, Miss L Wilson, the Vice-Chairperson, Councillor M McRandal, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025.

- 13.2 Councillor McRandal drew attention to the Committee's discussion on sickness absence. He confirmed that efforts were being made by staff in Human Resources to improve sickness absence figures and initiatives such as the re-instatement of the Staff Appraisal scheme should aid in this effort. He added that this issue would be kept under review by the Committee.

- 13.3 On a proposal by the Committee Vice-Chairperson, seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley the draft minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 30 January 2025 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.

- 13.4 On a proposal by the Committee Vice-Chairperson, seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Business Support Committee Effectiveness Review 2024/25 to include an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation
- Hybrid Working Policy Review

- 13.5 On a proposal by the Committee Vice-Chairperson, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Board approved and adopted the following:

- Policy on the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection (Review)
- Disposal of the former Dunmurry Library Property

14. MATTERS IN COMMITTEE

- 14.1 On a proposal by Ms W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Board agreed to go into Committee.

- 14.2 On a proposal by Mr A Driscoll, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Board agreed to come out of Committee.

- 14.3 The Chairperson reported that while in Committee, the Board had discussed a staffing matter, working relationships with The Linen Hall Library and a media enquiry.

15. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

- 15.1 Councillor R Lynch informed the Board that she had been unable to attend the Induction for new Board Members which had been previously arranged. The Director of Library Services had arranged for an individual induction to take place with staff from the Services Directorate on 24 January 2025 in Holywood Library and which had also included a tour of Bangor Carnegie Library. Councillor Lynch asked that her thanks be recorded to the Director of Library Services and her team for accommodating the induction on what turned out to be a very busy day due to the red weather warning for Storm Éowyn

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 16.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 17 April 2025 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library.

17. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 17.1 The meeting ended at 1:10 pm.
- 17.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.

Signed:


Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date:

17 April 2025