

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Lisburn City Library and remotely via video link (Zoom) on Thursday 13 October 2022 at 10:30 am

PRESENT

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| Professor Bernard Cullen | Chairperson |
| Councillor Julie Gilmour | Vice-Chairperson |
| Councillor Cheryl Brownlee (remotely) | |
| Alderman Thomas Burns | |
| Councillor Alistair Cathcart (remotely) | |
| Mrs Deirdre Kenny (remotely) | |
| Councillor Cathal Mallaghan | |
| Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE (remotely) | |
| Mr John Peto | |
| Mr Harry Reid | |
| Councillor Billy Webb MBE JP (remotely) | |
| Miss Linda Wilson | |

IN ATTENDANCE

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| Mr Jim O'Hagan | Chief Executive |
| Mr Desi Miskelly | Director of Business Support |
| Mrs Michelle Anderson (remotely) | Head of Internal Audit |
| Ms Adrienne Adair | Head of Service |
| Ms Stefani Millar | Boardroom Apprentice |
| Ms Diane McGlynn | Minutes |

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

- 1.1 An apology was received from Dr M Ward.

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. No interests were declared.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 The Chairperson welcomed Members and staff to the meeting, he particularly welcomed Ms S Millar, Boardroom Apprentice, to her first Libraries NI Board Meeting.

- 3.2 The Chairperson reported that he had received a letter from DfC dated 18 August 2022 giving formal approval of the Libraries NI Business Plan 2022/23.

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.

COVID-19 Inquiry Planning

- 4.2 The Chief Executive referred to recent correspondence and information received in relation to the Inquiry and confirmed that Libraries NI had not sought core participant status.

Book Week NI 2022

- 4.3 The Chief Executive drew attention to Book Week NI which would take place between 17 – 23 October 2022, informing Members that this was the seventh year of the Libraries NI Book Week partnership with BBC NI. He reported that the theme for this year is 'Read All About It!' and encouraged as many Board Members as possible to take part in the week long events. The Chief Executive agreed to circulate the brochure of events to Board Members.

Get Online Week

- 4.4 The Chief Executive drew attention to Get Online Week, also taking place during the week 17 – 23 October 2022 with libraries providing a range of programmes and events help people develop their online and digital skills.

Boardroom Apprentice 2022

- 4.5 The Chief Executive referred to the circulated document providing profiles of the 2022 Boardroom Apprentice cohort.

Libraries Connected: Cost of Living Briefing and forthcoming meeting

- 4.6 The Chief Executive referred to the forthcoming meeting to be held in Belfast Central Library on 27 October 2022 with the Chief Executive of Libraries Connected, Isobel Hunter and President, Ayub Khan.

Presentation to the County and City Librarians of Ireland

- 4.7 The Chief Executive reported on his presentation to the County and City Librarians of Ireland at their autumn seminar on 6 October 2022. The presentation reflected on the role of Libraries NI as a single public library authority and the successes and challenges since its inception.

Launch of Heritage Services in Armagh on 11 October 2022

- 4.8 The Chief Executive reported on the successful launch of the Cultural Heritage service at Markethill Road, Armagh, which was opened by the Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan.

Assembly Questions

- 4.9 It was noted that there were no Assembly Questions during the period 1 July to 30 September 2022.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 7 JULY 2022
LNI 01.10.22

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 7 JULY 2022
LNI 02.10.22

- 6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting the following.

Items 7.3 Annual Business Plan 2022/23

- 6.2 Following submission of the Annual Business Plan to the Department, as reported by the Chairperson, formal approval had been received in a letter dated 18 August 2022.

Item 11.4 Annual Budget and Spending Plan 2022/23: Update

- 6.3 Financial pressures had been notified to the Department in late June 2022 with an updated submission made on 1 August 2022 highlighting escalating pressures and subsequently updated again on 16 August 2022. The Chief Executive reported that while an acknowledgement has been received, no formal responses have been received.
- 6.4 In line with the Board request to have an update on financial pressures and proposed actions at the next meeting, it was noted that this item was later on the agenda.

7. MINUTES OF THE BOARD PLANNING MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2022
LNI 03.10.22

- 7.1 On a proposal by Ms D Kenny, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Board approved the minutes of the Board Planning Meeting held on 8 September 2022.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE BOARD PLANNING MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2022
LNI 04.10.22

- 8.1 There were no matters arising noted from the Board Planning Meeting held on 8 September 2022. The Chief Executive welcomed any further comments on the Public Library Strategy to be sent to him.

9. REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 OCTOBER 2022

- 9.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne OBE, reminded Members that a meeting of the Committee had taken place on 12 October 2022, the formal minutes of which would be available at the next

Board Meeting to be held on 8 December 2022. She referred to the pre-meeting held with representatives from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and ASM and confirmed that appropriate assurances were given on governance, the conduct of the audit of accounts 2021/22 and the co-operation and access provided by Libraries NI officers.

- 9.2 She reported that the vacant position of Committee Chairperson following the sad passing of Councillor G Finlay had been filled in line with the Standing Orders. It was noted that Ms W Osborne OBE was elected as Chairperson and Councillor A Cathcart was elected as Vice-Chairperson.
- 9.3 Mrs W Osborne OBE then referred to the existing membership of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, three independent Members and one Councillor Member, and proposed that the Board seek nominations for an additional Councillor Member to join the committee. The Chairperson of the Board asked for a volunteer to temporarily join the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee until the current recruitment process for three additional Board Members was completed and the membership could be reviewed. Councillor B Webb MBE JP volunteered to join the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for the interim period.
- 9.4 She went on to confirm that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had recommended approval of the following items to the Board which are part of the Board agenda:
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2021/22
 - Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22
 - Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April to September 2022)
 - Corporate Risk Register September 2022.
- 9.5 Members thanked Mrs W Osborne OBE report.

10. LIBRARIES NI ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2021/22

LNI 05.10.22

- 10.1 The Chief Executive presented four documents for the consideration of the Board and reported on each in turn.

Provisional Report to Those Charged with Governance 2021/22

- 10.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) had completed the audit of the 2021/22 Accounts and had indicated that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) would certify the 2021/22 financial statements with an unqualified audit opinion. It was noted that the report contained one 'Priority Three' finding/recommendation relating to the management of the fixed assets register.
- 10.3 Members noted the Provisional Report to Those Charged with Governance 2021/22. The Chairperson, on behalf of the Board, highlighted the excellent achievement in attaining an unqualified audit opinion and commended the staff involved.

- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2021/22
- 10.4 The Chief Executive reported that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is required to report annually to the Board on the External Audit Statement in respect of the Accounts, the state of the organisation's finances and on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management and other governance and control issues within the organisation.
- 10.5 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne OBE, confirmed that Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee were content to provide this assurance based on the work carried out by the Committee during the year. Members also noted the Head of Internal Audit's assurance contained in the report.
- 10.6 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne OBE, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Board adopted the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2021/22.
- Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22
- 10.7 The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 and reported that no significant changes had been made to the document since it was last reviewed by Members.
- 10.8 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22 for submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification and further agreed to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Chief Executive as Accounting Officer in the event any revisions were subsequently required by the NIAO.
- Letter of Representation
- 10.9 The Chief Executive referred to the Letter of Representation and reminded Members that as Accounting Officer he was required to submit a Letter of Representation when the signed Annual Report and Accounts were being sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General for certification.
- 10.10 Members noted the Letter of Representation.

11. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 06.10.22

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

- Finance Report: August 2022 LNI 06.10.22 (i)
- 11.2 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to August 2022 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 29 September 2022.

- 11.3 He drew attention to the Capital Report noting that all projects with the exception of Fivemiletown Library are progressing and that at the end of August an underspend of £78,000 was projected. He confirmed that work was in hand to reduce the underspend by the addition of contingency projects to the capital programme.

- 11.4 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Recurrent Report noting that a potential overspend of some £1.34 million had been projected. It was noted that a more in-depth analysis would be provided under agenda item 12.

Corporate Risk Register

LNI 06.10.22 (ii)

- 11.5 The Director of Business Support drew attention to the Corporate Risk Register which had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 12 October 2022. He reported that in general risk levels across the organisation had increased, largely as a result of the challenging financial situation being faced. He reported on each risk in turn explaining the difficulties and challenges faced by the organisation and the resulting risk rating.

- 11.6 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at September 2022.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) 2022/23: Quarter One: April to June 2022

LNI 06.10.22 (iii)

- 11.7 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Report for Quarter One: April to June 2022. Members noted that the majority of KPIs were on target for achievement. However, targets relating to budget expenditure and sickness absence remain challenging.

- 11.8 The Board noted the KPI 2022/23 Quarter One Report.

Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (April to September 2022) LNI 06.10.22 (iv)

- 11.9 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 30 September 2022. He confirmed that it had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at the meeting of the Committee held on 12 October 2022, and Members had been content to recommend the document to the Board for approval.

- 11.10 He highlighted the recurring financial pressures impacting all aspects of service delivery, including the inadequacy of the indicative resource allocation; absence of a strategic capital programme; and the impact of the cost of living crisis.

- 11.11 The Chief Executive then went through each section highlighting areas indicated as 'working towards compliance' and explained, where applicable, actions being taken to remedy the situation.

- 11.12 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne OBE, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Board approved the Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 30 September 2022.

12. 2022/23 BUDGET MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

LNI 07.10.22

- 12.1 The Director of Business Support presented the report outlining the current financial position with proposed mitigating actions for the Board to consider to ensure expenditure was controlled, as far as is practical, within resource

allocation limits. He set the scene by outlining the indicative budget allocation for 2022/23, financial responsibility and accountability and the areas of immediate concern impacting the projected overspend.

- 12.2 Mr D Miskelly described three initial discretionary proposals for the Board to consider. For each proposal, he outlined the potential quantum of expenditure reduction, scalability, deliverability, potential impacts and equality/rural needs and/or legislative considerations.
- 12.3 Mr D Miskelly suggested that the Board consider implementation of the discretionary measures and note the potential further measures outlined but that prior to progressing any action on these more significant steps that all potential avenues of obtaining additional support from DfC were fully explored and exhausted.
- 12.4 The Board discussed the challenging financial position and the impact of the discretionary and additional proposals on frontline services. Members highlighted the important role and the value of libraries in communities during the cost of living crisis as more crucial now than ever.
- 12.5 The Board were strongly opposed to implementing measures however, in recognising its financial management and governance responsibilities, reluctantly agreed that work to implement the discretionary measures could be commenced immediately with a view to controlling expenditure.
- 12.6 Before any further measures were deployed, the Board asked the Chief Executive to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities, highlighting the severity of the situation and challenges faced.
- 12.7 Board Members thanked the Director of Business Support for an exceptionally comprehensive report.

**13. MINUTES OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE HELD ON
30 JUNE 2022 LNI 08.10.22**

- 13.1 The Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Mr J Peto, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2022.
- 13.2 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the Information Systems Committee held on 30 June 2022.

**14. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER
2022 LNI 09.10.22**

- 14.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor C Mallaghan, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2022.
- 14.2 On a proposal by Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 15 September 2022.

- 14.3 On a proposal by the Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the Fees and Charges 2023/24.
- 14.4 On a proposal by the Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the Room Hire Policy
- 14.5 On a proposal by the Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted Libraries NI: Towards a new Membership Model.

**15. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON
29 SEPTEMBER 2022 LNI 10.10.22**

- 15.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Alderman T Burns, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2022.
- 15.2 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 29 September 2022.
- 15.3 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Board approved and adopted the Job Transfer Policy.
- 15.4 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Ms D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the Hybrid Working Policy.
- 15.5 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Miss L Wilson, the Board approved and adopted the Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2021/22.

16. STAFFING MATTERS

- 16.1 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board agreed to go in to Committee. Mr D Miskelly, Ms M Anderson and Ms A Adair left the meeting.
- 16.2 While in Committee the Chief Executive made the Board aware of two Industrial Tribunal claims against Libraries NI and others, relating to Pension Scheme changes. He also provided an update on the current recruitment process for a Director of Library Services.
- 16.3 On a proposal by Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Alderman T Burns, the Board agreed for the Chairperson to approve, on behalf of the Board, an offer of appointment to any successful candidate emerging from the recruitment process.
- 16.4 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board agreed to come out of Committee.

17. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

17.1 There was no other notified business.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 8 December 2022 at 10.30 am either in Lisburn City Library or remotely via video link.

19. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

19.1 The meeting ended at 12:34 pm.

19.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

- Councillor C Brownlee joined at 10:34 am and left at 11:47 am
- Councillor C Mallaghan joined at 11:13 am and left at 12:33 pm
- Mrs M Anderson joined at 10:38 am and left at 12:28 pm
- Mr D Miskelly and Ms A Adair left the meeting at 12:28 pm.

Signed:



Professor Bernard Cullen, Chairperson

Date:

8 December 2022

