

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 28 May 2026 at 10:30am

(Hybrid via video link and in person at Lisburn City Library)

VL – attendance via video link

IP – attendance in person

PRESENT

Ms Bonnie Anley (IP)	Chairperson of Libraries NI Board
Councillor Martin McRandal (IP)	Chairperson
Councillor Julie Gilmour (VL)	
Councillor Roisin Lynch (VL)	
Ursula O'Hare (VL)	
Mr John Peto (VL)	
Miss Linda Wilson (IP)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jim O'Hagan (IP)	Chief Executive
Mr Desi Miskelly (IP)	Director of Business Support
Mrs Jacqui McKinstry (VL)	Head of Human Resources
Mr Tim Neeson (IP)	Assets Manager
Mrs Rita McNamee (IP)	Finance Manager
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

- 1.1 An apology was received from Mr D Curry, Head of ICU/ICT, due to unforeseen circumstances, the Committee extended their best wishes to Mr D Curry.

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 There was no Chairperson's business.

4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

BSC.01.05.26

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support reminded Members of the approval to dispose of the former Dunmurry Library premises granted in November 2024 and reported that the property had now been placed for sale on the open market on an 'offers over £200,000' basis. Proceeds from the sale when completed would be divided equally between the joint owners Libraries NI and South Eastern Health Trust. He confirmed that he would keep the Business Support Committee informed of progress.
- 4.2 The Director of Business Support confirmed that an annual budget allocation was still awaited. However, he informed the Committee that following a meeting that he had attended with the Department on 27 May 2026 it appeared increasingly likely decisions on annual funding arrangements would be further delayed and there was potential for a further interim three-month allocation based on 95% of the 2025/26 baseline being made.
- 4.3 Members discussed challenges and impacts of interim allocations on budget management and service provision, and the Director of Business Support assured the Committee that these would continue to be highlighted to the Department for Communities. The Chairperson also confirmed that following the Board Meeting on 23 April 2026, she had written to the Permanent Secretary of the Department on behalf of the Board, noting the concerns that were raised.
- 4.4 The Director of Business Support reported that the Resource Maintenance and Capital Development Plan 2026/27 would be delayed until a final annual budget allocation was received.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2026

BSC.02.05.26

- 5.1 Member's highlighted a number of minor typos in the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026.
- 5.2 Subject to the amendment of the typos discussed, on a proposal by Miss L Wilson and seconded by Ms B Anley, the minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 26 March 2026 were approved as a correct record of the meeting. It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board as an as read record at its meeting held on 23 April 2026.

6. MATTERS ARISING

BSC.03.05.26

Strategic Workforce Planning

- 6.1 Miss L Wilson drew attention to paragraph 6.10 of the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026, noting the agreement to add a standing agenda item 'strategic workforce planning' to Business Support Committee Meetings. The Director of Business Support apologised for the oversight and confirmed this would be added to the agenda for future meetings.

Election of Vice-Chairperson

- 6.2 The Chairperson proposed Mr J Peto for the position of Vice-Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Miss L Wilson seconded the proposal. Mr J Peto accepted the position and Councillor M McRandal welcomed and thanked the Vice-Chairperson.

Investors in People (IIP) Survey - Update

- 6.3 Ms J McKinstry, Head of Human Resources, gave a presentation on the analysis of the IIP Survey and the People and Culture Action Plan. She reported that there was a 58% response rate to the survey and gave a breakdown of the number of responses by specific staff groups, highlighting the highest and lowest scoring themes and noting the uniqueness of Libraries NI as a single organisation for all of Northern Ireland and the variety of roles throughout it. The Head of Human Resources drew attention to eight 'action' pillars that had been developed following analysis of the survey outputs.
- 6.4 The Chairperson thanked the Head of Human Resources for the presentation and welcomed feedback from Members. Committee Members commented that it would be useful to hear how Libraries NI's survey results compare to other organisations and that the action plan appeared ambitious considering the limited resources available to the Human Resources Team. Members emphasised the need for management to be clear in communicating how the issues identified would be addressed and suggested there may be merit in including 'diversity' as a theme in the pillars
- 6.5 The Head of Human Resources confirmed that she would take the points raised in to consideration and highlighted that the action plan was aligned to the timeframe of Libraries NI's Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030. She also confirmed that she has contacts in other organisations that are also implementing IIP and reported that progress updates would be included under the standing agenda item 'strategic workforce planning' going forward.

7. STUDENT WORK PLACEMENT POLICY – REVIEW BSC.04.05.26

- 7.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the reviewed Student Work Placement Policy reporting that the policy remained fit for purpose and highlighting a minor change in the addition of paragraph 1.5 to confirm that the Joint Trade Unions were consulted with as part of the review process.
- 7.2 Members enquired as to how common student work placements were within the organisation. The Assets Manager reported that there was currently one placement student role in the Assets Team and Ms J McKinstry informed the Committee that a placement position had recently been advertised with Ulster University for Libraries NI Human Resources Team and the selection process was underway.

7.3 The Head of Human Resources clarified that the Student Work Placement Policy referred to paid work placements and that school work experience requests were managed locally.

7.4 On a proposal by Ms B Anley, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Business Support Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the revised Student Work Placement Policy to the Board.

8. CAREER BREAK POLICY - REVIEW BSC.05.05.26

8.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the reviewed Career Break Policy noting that the policy remained fit for purpose and highlighting minor changes made to terminology and references to updated legislation.

8.2 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson seconded by Mr J Peto, the Business Support Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the revised Career Break Policy to the Board.

9. WORKPLACE SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY - REVIEW BSC.06.05.26

9.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the reviewed Work Substance Abuse Policy noting minor revisions to reflect that Joint Trade Unions were consulted with as part of the review process and that a reference to the new Grievance Policy had been added.

9.2 In response to a question, Ms J McKinstry explained the context of the policy which was primarily focused on an approach of safeguarding employee health based on 'fitness for work' with scenarios to differentiate when the Work Substance Abuse Policy would apply and when the Discipline Policy would be more appropriate.

9.3 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Business Support Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the revised Work Substance Abuse Policy to the Board.

10. STAFF APPRAISAL POLICY - REVIEW BSC.07.05.26

10.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the revised Staff Appraisal Policy reporting that the policy remained fit for purpose and highlighted minor changes to update the policy in line with the new Human Resources performance management system that was introduced in the previous year.

10.2 In response to questions, Ms J McKinstry confirmed that Libraries NI does not currently operate a 360 appraisal process but that it may be considered as part of the IIP process.

- 10.3 On a proposal by Ms B Anley, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Business Support Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the revised Staff Appraisal Policy to the Board.

11. GRIEVANCE POLICY (NEW)

BSC.08.05.26

- 11.1 The Head of Human Resources introduced the new Grievance Policy which was developed in line with the Labour Relations Agency Code of Practice on dealing with Discipline and Grievance. She reported that the policy was subject to consultation with Joint Trade Unions, equality screening and a rural needs impact assessment.
- 11.2 In response to questions from the Committee, Ms J McKinstry explained that Libraries NI previously invoked grievance procedures as part of its Discipline Policy and that the new Grievance Policy clearly defined the rights of an employee to raise a concern. She gave examples of when the Grievance Policy would be applied, referenced other related policies and procedures and described the process for managing grievances from or about an agency employee.
- 11.3 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Business Support Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Grievance Policy to the Board.

12. DRAFT BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICE PLAN 2026/27

BSC.09.05.26

- 12.1 The Director of Business Support presented the draft Business Support Service Plan 2026/27 which identified targets in line with the draft Business Plan which had been presented to the Board in April 2026. He informed Members that the draft Service Plan was subject to refinements pending confirmation of a final budget allocation as such the targets were at present aspirational and resource dependent.
- 12.2 The Director of Business Support drew attention to a number of targets that were in line with supporting the Services Directorate in normal service delivery and then Business Support specific targets and provided the context in which they were set.
- 12.3 Members discussed the Business Support Service Plan, suggesting additional wording and revised completion dates, specifically around targets relating to health and wellbeing, appraisals and review of the corporate and business support risk registers.
- 12.4 The Director of Business Support agreed to reflect on the comments received, amend the Business Support Service Plan accordingly and present the plan again at the next meeting in September for approval, at which stage a financial allocation would hopefully be confirmed.

- 12.5 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Business Support Committee approved the Business Support Service Plan in principle, subject to amendments in line with discussion above.

13. BUSINESS SUPPORT RISK REGISTER 2026/27 BSC.10.05.26

- 13.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Business Support Risk Register which was aligned to the Corporate Risk Register and detailed the risks identified in relation to the Business Support Service Plan. He outlined each risk in turn, noting the impact of an interim three-month budget allocation and the actions in place to mitigate the risks.

- 13.2 The Business Support Committee discussed the risks, issues and mitigating actions and the Director of Business Support responded to questions, providing context to the treated risk ratings and the purpose of horizon scanning. The following amendments were suggested:

- Risk 2: Staff – align action with Business Support Service Plan i.e. outworkings of IIP and focus on appraisals
- Risk 4: Resources – reword second action further consider treated risk rating.

- 13.3 Subject to the above amendments, on a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the Business Support Committee approved the Business Support Risk Register.

14. INFORMATION SYSTEMS REPORT MAY 2026 BSC.11.05.26

- 14.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Information Systems Report that was prepared by the Head of ICT/ICU and provided an update on the e3 project, including information on performance against contractual service levels and the management of information and data security. He drew attention to a number of significant achievements such as securing the Public Sector Shared Network (PSSN) to September 2030 and completion of the complex project within the agreed timescales and budget.

- 14.2 The Business Support Committee noted the Information Systems Report.

15. FINANCE REPORTS

- RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO MARCH 2026 BSC.12.05.26**
- 15.1 Rita McNamee, Finance Manager, presented the Resource Expenditure Report to 31 March 2026 and gave an overview of the spend profile noting additional in-year funding, adjustments and reallocations and contributing factors. She reported an underspend of £114,000 equating to a 0.32% variance.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO MARCH 2026 BSC.13.05.26

15.2 The Finance Manager then presented the Capital Expenditure Report to 31 March 2026, reporting a £4,000 underspend, equating to the 0.4% variance.

15.3 On behalf of the Board, Ms B Anley commended the management of the resource and capital budgets with the acceptable parameters, recognising the multiple variables that impact budget monitoring. The Business Support Committee noted the 2025/26 Finance Reports.

**16. PROCUREMENT REPORT - GOODS AND SERVICES BSC.14.05.26
TENDERS OVER £1,000 AND SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000**

16.1 The Finance Manager introduced the Procurement Report for goods and services over £1,000 for the period 6 March 2026 – 12 May 2026, noting that no new leases were agreed and no leases were renewed during the period.

16.2 The Business Support Committee noted the Procurement Report.

17. SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO APRIL 2026 BSC.15.05.26

17.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report to 30 April 2026 and confirmed a composite average of 12.75 full time equivalent (FTE) days lost, an increase of 0.31% from the end of March and exceeding the business plan target and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 11.5 days for 2026/27. Ms J McKinstry informed the Committee that since the report was compiled, of the 28 employees on long-term sickness at 30 April 2026, 12 had returned to work, three had retired on grounds of ill-health, two were progressing on retirement on grounds of ill-health and one employee has resigned, of the remaining ten employees, three are engaging with occupational health and seven are engaging in contact meetings with managers.

17.2 The Head of Human Resources confirmed that managers were supported through the HR Forum in managing sickness absence and engaging with their staff to help them remain at or return to work.

17.3 Members thanked the Head of Human Resources for the ongoing effort in addressing sickness management and striving to achieve the KPI target.

17.4 The Head of Human Resources then gave a presentation on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy draft structure, developed in line with the key priorities identified through the recent IIP survey. She gave an overview of the main indicators and priorities and demonstrated how managers would be supported in delivering the strategy including the availability of online resources. Ms J McKinstry emphasised Libraries NI's commitment to making wellbeing visible, consistent and leader-led, noting that staff engagement would be key in taking the strategy forward and that the opportunity was welcomed.

17.5 Members thanked the Head of Human Resources for the presentation and

welcomed the positive move forward, however, noted the apparent absence of a reference to 'health' throughout the presentation. Ms J McKinstry confirmed that health is a significant element of the strategy and assured Members that it has been considered and is included together with wellbeing and apologised for the oversight in making this evident. She agreed to update the presentation and strategy accordingly.

18. REPORT ON PROMPT PAYMENT PERFORMANCE 2025/26 BSC.16.05.26

18.1 The Finance Manager presented the Prompt Payment Performance 2025/26 report in line with the Key Performance Indicator '90% of invoices will be paid within ten working days'. Ms McNamee reported a 90% of invoices were paid within ten working days in 2025/26 and attributed the decrease in the last quarter to an additional in-year funding allocation that increased the demand on resources at year end.

18.2 The Business Support Committee noted the Prompt Payment Performance Report.

19. DRAFT ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2025/26 BSC.17.05.26

19.1 The Finance Manager presented the draft Annual Accounts 2025/26 for noting, she advised that the Annual Accounts would also be presented at the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting for consideration and subsequently to the Board for approval prior to submission to the Northern Ireland Audit Office for a detailed audit. Ms McNamee highlighted key points from the balance sheet.

19.2 The Business Support Committee noted the draft Annual Accounts 2025/26.

20. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

20.1 There was no other notified business.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Business Support Committee would be held on Thursday 24 September 2026 at 10:30am in Lisburn City Library.

22. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

22.1 The meeting ended at 1:04pm

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

- Ms U O'Hare joined at 11:00am
- Councillor J Gilmour left at 12:47pm.

Signed

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Dated

24/9/26