

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Lisburn City Library and by remote video link (Zoom) on Thursday 12 December 2024 at 10:30 am

PRESENT

Ms Bonnie Anley (IP)	Chairperson
Councillor J Gilmour (IP)	Vice-Chairperson

Councillor Alistair Cathcart (IP)
Mr Adrian Driscoll (IP)
Councillor Roisin Lynch (IP)
Councillor Andrew McAuley (VL)
Councillor Martin McRandal (VL)
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE (IP)
Mr John Peto (IP)
Councillor Gareth Sharvin (IP)
Miss Linda Wilson (IP)

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jim O'Hagan (IP)	Chief Executive
Mr Desi Miskelly (IP)	Director of Business Support
Ms Adrienne Adair (IP)	Director of Library Services
Mr John Ball (IP)	Department for Communities
Mr Gary Craig (IP)	Department for Communities
Dr Simon Morton (IP)	Department for Communities

Note: IP denotes 'in-person' attendance, VL denotes 'virtual' attendance

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Ms Ursula O'Hare
Councillor Rosie Kinnear

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 Board extended its condolences to Councillor R Kinnear on the recent death of her partner Mr N O'Murchu.

3.2 The Chairperson welcomed Members and staff to the meeting. In particular she welcomed Mr J Ball, Head of Culture Policy Branch, Mr G Craig and Dr S Morton also from Culture Policy Branch, Department for Communities (DfC) who were in attendance to provide an update on the new Public Libraries Policy.

3.3 Members were reminded of the 'Celebrating Partnership' lunch which would take place after the Board meeting at 1.00 pm. The Chairperson encouraged as many Members as possible to attend.

3.4 The Chairperson reminded Members of the discussion at the last Board Meeting held on 17 October 2024 in relation to Committee Membership when it was agreed that one further Board Member should be appointed to each Committee to add a level of resilience and to minimise risk with regard to quoracy. Following that meeting the Chief Executive, taking account of the need to maintain a balance between Councillor and non-Councillor Members had engaged with individual Board Members to seek nominations. The Chairperson thanked Members for the positive response to this request and the following changes to Committee Membership were brought to the Board for approval:

- On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor R Lynch the Board approved that Mrs W Osborne would step down from the Business Support Committee and be appointed to the Services Committee
- On a proposal by Councillor G Sharvin, seconded by Miss L Wilson the Board approved that Councillor J Gilmour be appointed as a permanent member of the Business Support Committee
- On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor R Lynch the Board approved Ms U O'Hare be appointed to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

3.5 The Chairperson confirmed that following these appointments the breakdown of Committee membership numbers is as follows:

- Services Committee: 3x Councillor, 4x Independent, Total 7*
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee: 3x Councillor, 3 x Independent, Total 6**
- Business Support Committee: 3x Councillor, 3x Independent, Total 6*

* Includes the Board Chairperson as a Committee Member

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- 3.6 The Chairperson drew attention to two events which had taken place recently:
- the Community re-opening of Killyleagh Library on 6 December 2024. The Chairperson reported that this had been a positive event and thanked those Board Members who had attended
 - a Preview evening had been held for Fivemiletown Library on 11 December 2024. This was an opportunity for stakeholders and members of the local community to see the new library and to meet the staff. The Chairperson reported that the event had been well attended.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the paper which had been circulated, drawing attention in particular to the undernoted items:
- Boardroom Apprentice Scheme – Letter of Support
 - Revised Budget Allocations – Capital and Resource
 - Enniskillen Library Project Approval
 - Fivemiletown Library
 - Killyleagh Library
 - Christmas and New Year Closure
 - Book Club and Reading Corner at the Macmillan Cancer Support and Information Centre
 - Book Week NI, 21 – 27 October 2024
 - Meetings held / attended
 - Macmillan Coffee Mornings
 - BBC Comes to Town
 - Assembly Questions
- 4.2 Mr A Driscoll referred to the data breach at the British Library and asked if any lessons could be learned from the investigation report. The Chief Executive reminded Members that Libraries NI operated through a third party managed service provider who have rigorous security controls in place. He confirmed that the report of the investigation will be reviewed for any lessons learned.
- 4.3 Councillor R Lynch referred to the Book Club and Reading Corner at the Macmillan Cancer Support and Information Centre and enquired if there were plans to further roll out this initiative to other Cancer Centres in hospitals. The Chief Executive responded that monitoring and evaluation of the initiative will take place before a decision is taken to expand it. The Director of Library Services added that the use of eResources (books, Magazines, Newspapers) in hospitals and outpatient centres was an opportunity that we would further promote. The Director also referenced the benefits of the pilot book club which we could look to expand if we had the resources to do so.

- 4.4 The Chief Executive informed Members that since the beginning of the partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support 12 years ago, Libraries NI staff have raised £128,397.50 through hosting Macmillan Coffee mornings. The final total for the 2024 coffee mornings held during September 2024 was £12,156.80. Over 82 libraries participated in this event. The Chief Executive thanked all staff involved for their hard work in making this annual event very successful.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2024
LNI 01.12.24

- 5.1 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 17 October 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2024
LNI 02.12.24

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

Item 4.5: Chief Executive's Business

- 6.2 The Chief Executive confirmed that a letter had been issued to Ms E Mullan on 18 October 2024 expressing the Board's disappointment that the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme for 2025 had not be commissioned and encouraged her to continue to engage with The Executive Office to explore options for the future of the programme.

Item 8.2: Matters Arising from the Board Planning Meeting held on 12 September 2024

- 6.3 The Chief Executive reported that confirmation had been received on 25 October 2024 that Mr J Ball, Head of Culture Policy Branch, DfC would attend today's meeting to provide an update on the Public Libraries Policy.

Item 15.1 /15.2: Draft Programme for Government 2024 – 27 – Public Consultation Response

- 6.4 It was noted that these items had been completed. The Libraries NI response to the public consultation on the Draft Programme for Government 2024 – 27 had been circulated to Board Members on 29 October 2024, and was subsequently approved by the Chairperson on 1 November 2024 and submitted to The Executive Office on 1 November 2024.

7. UPDATE BY MR J BALL, HEAD OF CULTURE POLICY BRANCH, DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES (DFC) ON THE NEW PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY

- 7.1 The Chairperson introduced Mr J Ball, Head of Culture Policy Branch, DfC who was in attendance to provide an update to the Board on the work carried out to date by the Department on the new Public Library Policy.

- 7.2 Mr Ball thanked Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting and introduced his two colleagues Mr G Craig and Dr S Morton. Mr Ball reminded Members that Minister Lyons had released a statement on 3 July 2024 stating that there would be a portfolio of policies for Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) which would include a standalone policy for the public library service. He informed Members that Libraries NI was held in high regard by the Department and during his visits with other organisations he had observed that many would be keen to engage with Libraries NI. Mr Ball referred to the importance of funding for bookstock and although the new policy would not directly feed into providing this funding it was anticipated that it would provide a platform for discussions both within the department and on a more wider footing on core funding for the library service.
- 7.3 Mr G Craig then drew attention to the detail of the policy noting that it was proposed that it would cover a five year period from 2025 to 2030. He explained that although the HCC policies would be standalone for each Arms Length Body there would be a common approach taken for some principles which would be applied across all four policies. He described the structure and aims of the policy and the challenges facing Libraries NI as perceived by the Department. He explained that each of the policy aims would have relevant indicators for reporting purposes and to inform subsequent review of the policy. Subject to the Minister's agreement reporting against the current Public Library Standards (PLS) will cease with the introduction of the new policy although some of the current standards may serve as indicators for policy aims. Mr Craig reported that it was anticipated that public consultation on the policy will take place during February/March 2025. Staff within the Culture Policy Branch will continue to work with Libraries NI throughout the drafting process and are happy to receive feedback from Board Members.
- 7.4 Considerable discussion followed the presentation and it was agreed a summary of feedback from Board Members would be collated and sent through to the Department.
- 7.5 The Chairperson thanked Mr Ball and Mr Craig for their presentation and for their engagement with Board Members. She asked that the Board have an opportunity to review the Public Library Policy while in draft form. She encouraged Board members to feed through any feedback on this matter to the Chief Executive.
- 7.6 In consideration of the 'Celebrating Partnership' event scheduled for 1.00 pm, the Board agreed to modify the running order of the remaining Agenda to ensure those matters requiring consideration and approval were addressed within the remaining available time.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 9 as follows:

8. BOARD EFFECTIVENESS 2024/25

LNI 04.12.24

- 8.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the Board Effectiveness Review 2024/25 and reported that the Effectiveness checklist would be completed in draft and brought back to Members for review at the Board Meeting to be held on 13 February 2025. He drew attention to Appendix 3 which enabled Board Members to submit additional views or comments on any other matter relating to the review of Board/Committee Effectiveness. He asked that completed forms or other comments be returned to him no later than 17 January 2025.
- 8.2 Members noted that individual Committees had started or were about to start reviewing their effectiveness, including the continued relevance of the Schemes of Delegation and the process should be completed early in the New Year. A draft Action Plan based on all of the reviews would be presented to the Board at its meeting to be held on 13 February 2025.
- 8.3 Members were reminded that the recently adopted Partnership Agreement requires an externally facilitated review of Board Effectiveness at least once every three years covering the performance of the Board, its Committees and individual members. Previously, the Libraries NI Head of Internal Audit completed a review in July 2021 and provided independent assurance as to the Board effectiveness. The Chief Executive suggested that this item be included in the draft Action Plan.

Members agreed to move to Agenda Item 12 as follows:

9. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2024

LNI 06.12.24

- 9.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne presented the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024 noting that an oral report of this meeting had been given at the Board Meeting held on 17 October 2024, and at that meeting the Board had approved the following:
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Annual Report 2023/24
 - Libraries NI Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24
 - Bi-Annual Assurance Statement, 30 September 2024
 - Corporate Risk Register September 2024
- 9.2 On a proposal by Councillor R Lynch, seconded by the Committee Chairperson Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 16 October 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 9.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor A Cathcart, the Board approved and adopted the Amendment to the Internal Audit Annual Plan which had also been considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at the meeting held on 16 October 2024.

**10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON
21 NOVEMBER 2024 LNI 07.12.24**

- 10.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Mr J Peto, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024.
- 10.2 The Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley asked that the word 'recent' in the minutes at paragraph 4.14 be removed.
- 10.3 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mr J Peto seconded by Councillor R Lynch, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 21 November 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 10.4 on a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mr J Peto, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved and adopted the CustomerFirst Strategy and Presentation.
- 10.5 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley the Board approved and adopted the Review of Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy/Safe and Welcoming Libraries Policy.
- 10.6 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley the Board approved and adopted the Review of Safeguarding Policy.

**11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2024 LNI 08.12.24**

- 11.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Miss L Wilson, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024.
- 11.2 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 28 November 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 11.3 The Board noted that Councillor M McRandal had been appointed to the position of Vice-Chairperson of the Committee.
- 11.4 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson Miss L Wilson, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Board approved and adopted the Libraries NI Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2023/24. The Chairperson of the Board suggested that it may be useful to invite a representative from the Equality Commission to attend a future Committee to provide an overview of Section 75 requirements/regulations.

Members agreed to return to Agenda Item 8 as follows:

12. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 03.12.24

- 12.1 The Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support briefed the Board on the Management Report as follows:

Key Performance Indicators 2024/25 Quarter 2: July – September 2024

LNI 03.12.24 (i)

- 12.2 The Chief Executive reported on the progress against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) noting that six KPIs are reported as 'Amber' and staff will continue to work toward achieving these targets. The KPI to reduce sickness absence levels is reported as 'Red' and at this stage it is unlikely that the target will be achieved by 31 March 2025. Members noted that 12 KPIs are reported as 'Green' with progress in line with expectations at this point in the year.

Business Plan 2024/25: Progress Report: April to September 2024

LNI 03.12.24 (ii)

- 12.3 The Chief Executive drew attention to the six month update on the Business Plan 2024/25 and reported that progress had been made in respect of the majority of Business Plan targets. He drew attention to those targets which had been reported as 'Red' and provided information on the steps being taken to progress these issues.

Finance Report: October 2024

LNI 03.12.24 (iii)

- 12.4 The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent spend to October 2024 which had been reviewed by the Business Support Committee at its meeting held on 28 November 2024.
- 12.5 As previously reported additional allocations for both capital and resource funding had been received from DfC in November 2024. He explained that a budget revision exercise was currently underway and it was anticipated that as a result of this exercise there would be some internal re-allocation of budgets and some additional funding earmarked for the purchase of bookstock early in the New Year.
- 12.6 The Board was pleased to note the additional monies allocated by the Department for the purchase of bookstock.
- 12.7 Members noted the report.

Members agreed to move to agenda item 10 as follows:

13. LIBRARIES NI RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT PUBLIC CONSULTATION

LNI 05.12.24

- 13.1 The Chairperson drew attention to the Libraries NI response to the draft Programme for Government Public Consultation. A copy of the response was circulated to Members for review prior to submission. The Chairperson thanked those Members who had provided feedback and submitted comments. The

Chairperson also thanked the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team for preparing the response.

- 13.2 The Board noted that the Libraries NI response was submitted to The Executive Office on 1 November 2024.

14. BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2025/26: UPDATE

- 14.1 The Chief Executive informed Members that Officers were working on preparing a paper to the Department setting out the budget requirement, challenges and issues facing the library service during the 2025/26 financial year. A more detailed briefing will be brought to Members at the February Board Meeting.

Members agreed to revert back to Agenda Item 15 as follows:

15. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

- 15.1 There was no other notified business
- 15.2 The Chairperson thanked Members and Officers for attending the meeting and wished all present the compliments of the season.

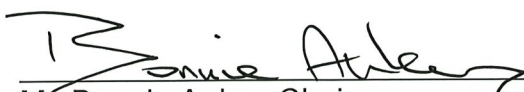
16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 16.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would take place on Thursday 13 February 2025 at 10:30 am in Antrim Library

17. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 17.1 The meeting ended at 1:07pm.
- 17.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:
- Councillor A Cathcart arrived at 10:42 am
- Mr J Ball left the meeting at 12:42 pm
- Mr Gary Craig left the meeting at 12:42 pm
- Dr S Morton left the meeting at 12:42 pm

Signed:


Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date:


13th February 2025

