

## **LIBRARIES NI**

### **The Northern Ireland Library Authority**

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held in Lisburn City Library on  
Thursday 27 June 2024 at 11:15 am

#### **PRESENT**

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

Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson

(IP) Ms Wendy Osborne OBE  
(IP) Mr John Peto  
(IP) Miss Linda Wilson

#### **IN ATTENDANCE**

(IP) Mr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
(IP) Mr Desi Miskelly	Director of Business Support
(IP) Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
(IP) Mrs Jacqui McKinstry	Human Resource Manager for Item 4
(IP) Ms Finola Guinnane	Boardroom Apprentice

No observer from the Department for Communities (DfC) attended the Board Meeting.

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

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE**

Councillor Alistair Cathcart  
Councillor Andrew McAuley  
Councillor Martin McRandal

#### **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 reported that this would be the last Board Meeting for Ms F Guinnane, the Boardroom Apprentice, and on behalf of Members and

Officers thanked Ms Guinnane for her contribution to the Board over the past year and wished her every success for the future. Ms Guinnane thanked Members for their support during her time on the Libraries NI Board adding that she would take forward the valuable experience she had gained and hoped to further improve on it in the future.

- 3.2 The Chairperson welcomed Ms J McKinstry, HR Manager to the meeting, who was in attendance for Item 4: Remuneration Committee: Update (In Committee).
- 3.3 The Chairperson reminded Members that Councillor J Gilmour had completed three years in the post of Vice-Chairperson of the Board. It was noted that the next 12 months would be a period of transition for the Board as five new members were due to be appointed within the next couple of months. During this period of transition Councillor Gilmour had agreed to continue in the role for another year and on a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Miss L Wilson the Chairperson declared that Councillor J Gilmour had been re-elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Libraries NI Board until July 2025.
- 3.4 The Chairperson confirmed that the recruitment process for new Board Members was continuing. The closing date for applications had now passed and applications were being reviewed with interviews planned for the end of July 2024 . She added that it was hoped that appointments would be made to the Libraries NI Board as soon as possible in September 2024.
- 3.5 On behalf of Members and Officers the Chairperson congratulated Councillor A Cathcart on his recent appointment as Mayor of Ards and North Down Borough Council.
- 3.6 The Chairperson reminded Members that the General Election was due to take place on 4 July 2024 and therefore the period of pre-election sensitivity (purdah) would remain in force until that date.
- 3.7 The Chairperson provided an update on the meeting with the DfC Minister she had attended with the Chief Executive on 18 June 2024. She updated the Board on the progress of a Public Library Strategy and reported that the Department were focused on finalising this document by April 2025, in step with our new Corporate Plan. Other items discussed included the recent bookstock issue which had received some media attention. The Chairperson had agreed to write to the Minister on this matter and a copy of the draft letter had been tabled for the information of Members.

***All Libraries NI staff with the exception of the HR Manager withdrew from the meeting.***

#### **4. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE: UPDATE (IN COMMITTEE)**

- 4.1 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, Members agreed to go into Committee.
- 4.2 While in Committee, the Chairperson provided an update on the meeting of the Remuneration Committee, which took place directly prior to the Board meeting, in relation to the review and approval of performance and remuneration of the Senior Management Team.
- 4.3 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, Members agreed to come out of Committee.

***Libraries NI staff rejoined the meeting.***

#### **5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS**

- 5.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the papers which had been circulated, drawing attention in particular to the undernoted items:
- Confirmation of Budget Allocation 2024/25
  - Boardroom Apprentice
  - Summer Opening Hours
  - Period Product Launch, 13 May 2024
  - Forthcoming Events and Activities
  - Covid Enquiry Module 8 Launch
  - Assembly Questions
- 5.2 He drew attention to the correspondence received from Ms E Mullan founder of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme advising that the programme will conclude on 31 August 2024 and at this point no future programmes are planned.
- 5.3 Mr J Peto asked if it was possible to find out if any of the applicants for the Board vacancies had previously been a part of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme. The Chairperson confirmed that she would check with DfC on this matter.
- 5.4 Members noted the report.

#### **6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 25 APRIL 2024 LNI 01.06.24**

- 6.1 On a proposal by Miss L Wilson, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 25 April 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

**7. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 25 APRIL 2024** **LNI 02.06.24**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper noting that all items had been completed as follows:

Item 4.2: Chief Executive's Business

- 7.2 The statistical document containing charts which provided an analysis of funding and budgeting trends for the Libraries NI Resource Budget, book stock and staffing was made available to Board Members on 30 April 2024.

Management Report,

- 7.3 Item 9.5: Bi-Annual Assurance Statement (1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024) and Item 9.8: Annual Board Assurance Statement 2023/24

The Chief Executive confirmed that the signed Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2024 and the Annual Board Assurance Statement 2023/24 had been forwarded to DfC on 26 April 2024.

Item 10.6: Interim Financial Allocation 2024/25

- 7.4 A copy of the correspondence sent to Mr C Boyle, Permanent Secretary, DfC on 29 April 2024 highlighting the issues created for Libraries NI by the interim budget allocation had been issued to members for information together with the response received on 13 May 2024.

Item 15.3: Recent media coverage regarding Book stock – In Committee

- 7.5 Following discussion at the April Board Meeting a 'Position' paper regarding the Board's position on the recent media coverage regarding book stock was circulated to Members for information. On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Mr J Peto the Board approved and adopted the Position paper.

**8. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 APRIL 2024** **LNI 03.06.24**

- 8.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, presented the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 April 2024. She reminded Members that at the Board Meeting held on 25 April 2024 she had presented an oral report on the Committee meeting of 24 April 2024 and the Board had approved the following:

- Bi-Annual Assurance Statement for the period ended 31 March 2024
- Annual Board Assurance Statement 2023/24
- Corporate Risk Register as at March 2024
- Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2024/25

- 8.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms Bonnie Anley, seconded by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs W Osborne, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 24 April 2024

were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting. It was noted that no additional items arising from this meeting required Board approval.

**9. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 JUNE 2024 LNI 04.06.24**

- 9.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Mrs W Osborne, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2024. As no Audit and Risk Assurance Committee member was in attendance to second the adoption of the minutes the Board noted their contents with a view to formal adoption taking place at the next scheduled Board Meeting to be held on 17 October 2024.
- 9.2 On a proposal by the Committee Chairperson, Mrs W Osborne , seconded by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, the Board approved and adopted the Internal Audit Charter (Annual Review).
- 9.3 The Committee Chairperson reported that at the Committee Meeting the Head of Internal Audit had provided an update to members on the Raising Concerns review which had been undertaken by Internal Audit and confirmed that Internal Audit had not found any evidence of significant management failings.

**10. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023/24 LNI 05.06.24**

- 10.1 The Chief Executive presented the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 which sets out in detail information on Libraries NI's activity and work during the year.
- 10.2 He reported that the document would remain in draft until the completion of the external audit of the Annual Accounts 2023/24, noting that the annual accounts will be submitted to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for audit on 12 August 2024. He confirmed that the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 had been scrutinised by Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at its meeting held on 12 June 2024.
- 10.3 Members noted that it was anticipated that the audit of the annual accounts would be completed over the summer and prior to certification by the Northern Ireland Audit Office the final audited Annual Report and Accounts would be brought to the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to be held on 16 October 2024 and then to the Board for approval on 17 October 2024.
- 10.4 The Board noted and accepted the recommendation from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee that the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 be submitted to the NIAO for audit on 12 August 2024.
- 10.5 Members noted the report.

## 11. MANAGEMENT REPORT

LNI 06.06.24

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

- 11.2 Key Performance Indicators 2023/24: End of Year Report LNI 06.06.24 (i)  
Members noted the end of year report for the Key Performance Indicators 2023/24.

- 11.3 Libraries NI Business Plan 2023/24: End of Year Report LNI 06.06.24 (ii)  
The Chief Executive explained that the Libraries NI Business Plan 2023/24 included some 43 separate objectives and targets, including sub-targets. The end of year report shows that 34 of the targets in the Business Plan were achieved in full, with a further two partially achieved and seven recorded as not achieved. The Chief Executive drew attention to the targets which had not been achieved providing additional information.

- 11.4 Finance Report: May 2024 LNI 06.06.24 (iii)  
The Director of Business Support presented the Finance Reports for Capital and Recurrent Spend to May 2024. He explained that DfC continue to consider the options for allocating funding following the challenging 2024/25 Capital budget set by the Northern Ireland Executive noting that at the time of drafting of the report a capital allocation remained outstanding. He confirmed that Libraries NI had authority (confirmed by DfC on 17 May 2024) to incur capital expenditure on existing contractual commitments and inescapable projects only.

- 11.5 The Director of Business Support then drew attention to the Recurrent Spend report which presents expenditure against the interim resource allocation of £7,253,000 in place at the time of reporting. He reminded Members that the interim resource allocation was made based on three months of the 2023/24 Opening Budget however it had not taken account of the expenditure demands falling due in the first quarter of the year. Consequently, actual expenditure incurred in maintaining services and in meeting statutory and contractual commitments was projected to exceed the interim allocation envelope by 30 June 2024.

- 11.6 An indicative Opening Budget Allocation 2024/25 was received from DfC on 18 June 2024 which superseded the interim allocation and this issue would be discussed in more detail at Agenda Item 12: Resource Funding Allocation and Proposed Budget and Spending Plan 2024/25.

- 11.7 Corporate Risk Register LNI 06.06.24 (iv)  
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 12 June 2024, noting that there had been no significant changes since it was last seen by Members at the April meeting of the Board. He reported that despite moving into a new financial year the high level risks remain very similar to what they were at the end of March as the same challenges in relation to long term planning and funding existed for

the organisation. It was noted that Risk 8 has now been re-named as Business Continuity Planning.

- 11.8 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Mr J Peto the Board approved and adopted the Corporate Risk Register as at May 2024 and noted the Management Report.

**12. RESOURCE FUNDING ALLOCATION AND PROPOSED BUDGET AND SPENDING PLAN 2024/25** **LNI 07.06.24**

- 12.1 The Director of Business Support informed Members that confirmation had been received on 18 June 2024 from DfC that the Libraries NI indicative Opening Budget Allocation for 2024/25 would be £31,189,000. The annual resource allocation, although indicative, was welcome and the increase in baseline funding from the previous year reflected the extensive work undertaken by both DfC and Libraries NI in attempting to move towards realistic, stable and sustainable levels of funding for the public library service.
- 12.2 The indicative resource allocation for 2024/25 while increasing the baseline funding position from the previous year's opening baseline also represents a decrease in comparison to the final funding position on 31 March 2024. Taking account of on-going inflationary pressures, the timing of allocations while providing some relief from immediate financial pressures continues to present a challenging position from which to plan and deliver public library services throughout the remainder of the year.
- 12.3 The Director of Business Support drew attention to the proposed budget and spending plan 2024/25 which was prepared on the basis of the notified indicative opening budget allocation of £31,189,000 (resource). The plan provides detail of the planning assumptions and the proposed spending profile required for the organisation to continue to deliver core services while remaining within the allocation envelope.
- 12.4 Members noted the difficulties of achieving a balanced budget within the confines of the indicative financial allocation and reiterated the Board's commitment to the provision of bookstock as a priority. Members recognised the challenges maintaining an adequate level of investment in library stock presented and that in doing so pressure was placed on other areas and that it was important DfC were aware of the impacts arising. The Chairperson suggested that the budget and spending plan framework document should be revised to reflect the Board's view.
- 12.5 Members asked that their thanks to the Chief Executive and the Director of Business Support be formally noted for their hard work with the Department to ensure that a relatively manageable opening budget allocation was received for Libraries NI.
- 12.6 On a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Mrs W Osborne the Board approved and adopted the Budget Spending Plan for 2024/25 as a framework within

which expenditure will be monitored and controlled until such times as a formal budget proposal can be brought forward for consideration.

**13. REVISED DRAFT ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25 LNI 08.06.24**

- 13.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the draft Annual Business Plan 2024/25 reminding Members that as notification of the financial allocation had only been received on 18 June this is the first opportunity for Members to review the finalised plan. Briefings on the draft Annual Business Plan 2024/25 had been provided to Members at both the February and April meetings of the Board. He reported that one additional Key Performance Indicator had been added in relation to the provision of Public Access Terminals (PATs) and WiFi hours to improve digital services, access and literacy.
- 13.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved the draft Annual Business Plan 2024/25 and agreed for its formal submission to the Department for Communities for departmental approval.

**14. CORPORATE PLAN 2025 – 30: PROGRESS UPDATE (PRESENTATION)**

- 14.1 The Chief Executive gave a presentation to Members on the proposed Corporate Plan 2025 – 30. He drew attention to the work which had taken place to date outlining the approach taken and the key people involved in the process as part of a Working Group. He explained the strategic priorities, issues, themes and enablers included in the Corporate Plan and the engagement process with stakeholders. The workplan and timeline for completion of the Corporate Plan was discussed and it was noted that the final draft would be brought to the Libraries NI Board for approval at the December meeting prior to submission to DfC for Ministerial approval. It was intended that the Corporate Plan would be officially launched on 1 April 2025.
- 14.2 The Chief Executive explained that the Corporate Plan would be discussed further at the Board Planning Day due to be held on 12 September 2024 and encouraged Members to provide feedback to him before this date.
- 14.3 It was agreed that a copy of the Presentation would be placed on the Extranet for the information of Members and that when finalised a copy of the Corporate Plan 2025 – 30 would also be made available to Members prior to the Board Planning Day in September.
- 14.4 The Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley also encouraged Members to provide feedback to the Chief Executive on the Corporate Plan. It was agreed that focussed questions in relation to the Corporate Plan would be issued to Members in advance of the Board Planning Day.



**15. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 MAY 2024**

**LNI 09.06.24**

- 15.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Mr J Peto presented the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024.
- 15.2 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Mr J Peto, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Services Committee held on 16 May 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 15.3 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved and adopted the Reading and Reader Development Strategy.
- 15.4 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Board approved and adopted the Collections Development Policy.

**16. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 MAY 2024**

**LNI 10.06.24**

- 16.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Miss L Wilson, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2024.
- 16.2 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson of the Board, Councillor J Gilmour, the draft minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee held on 30 May 2024 were adopted as an 'as read' record of the meeting.
- 16.3 On a proposal by the Vice-Chairperson of the Board, Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, the Board approved and adopted the following:
- Asset Management Policy Review
  - Payment of Travel and Subsistence Expenses Policy Review
  - Customer Feedback Policy Review
  - Data Protection Policy Review
- 16.4 On a proposal by the Chairperson of the Board, Ms B Anley, seconded by the Vice-Chairperson of the Board, Councillor J Gilmour, the Board approved and adopted the following:
- Business Support Service Plan 2024/25
  - Business Support Risk Register 2024/25

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 17.1 There was no other notified business.

**18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 18.1 Members noted that the Board Planning Day would take place in Omagh Library on Thursday 12 September 2024.

**19. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

- 19.1 The meeting ended at 1.55 pm.
- 19.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.

Signed:

  
Ms Bonnie Anley, Chairperson

Date:

17 October 2024