

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Support Committee held on

Thursday 25 January 2024 at 10:30am

(Hybrid via Video Link and in person at Lisburn City Library)

VL – Attendance via video link

IP – Attendance in person

PRESENT

(IP) Miss Linda Wilson	Chairperson
(IP) Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	
(VL) Councillor Peter Johnston	Vice Chairperson
(VL) Councillor Martin McRandal	

IN ATTENDANCE

(IP) Dr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
(IP) Mr Desi Miskelly	Director of Business Support
(IP) Mr Desi Curry	Head of ICU/ICT
(VL) Mrs Rita McNamee	Finance Manager
(VL) Mrs Jacqui McKinstry	Head of Human Resources
(VL) Mr Tim Neeson	Assets Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Ms Finola Guinnane

Councillor P Johnston advised he would have to leave the meeting at 11:50am.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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.

2.2 No interests were declared.

3 CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

3.1 The Chairperson advised that she had no items to discuss.

4 DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

BSC.01.01.24

- 4.1 The Director of Business Support advised that Ms Bonnie Anley had been appointed as the Chairperson of the Board of Libraries NI, her first formal attendance would be at the February Board meeting, consequently she was not in attendance at this meeting.
- 4.2 The Director of Business Support reported that subsequent to the December Board meeting DfC confirmed that following a technical reallocation exercise a supplementary allocation of some £1.2 million of resource funding had been allocated specifically to address pressures relating to the procurement of library book stock. This increased the available book stock procurement budget from its December position of £360,000 to £1,560,000 and work had commenced to ensure procurement and expenditure are completed ahead of 31 March 2024.
- 4.3 The Director of Business Support reported that DfC had confirmed allocation of £600,000 which was tied to resolution of the Branch Library Managers dispute and subject to ongoing negotiations.
- 4.4 The Director of Business Support advised that as part of the outworking of a strategic review of the library estate undertaken in 2010/11 Libraries NI had closed the former South Eastern Library Headquarters facility situated at Windmill Hill, Ballynahinch. Subsequently the land and property were transferred to the Department for Education, but a small, isolated parcel of land geographically removed from the main site remained in the ownership of Libraries NI. The retained land had no viable use to Libraries NI and had lain dormant for a number of years. An opportunity to dispose of the land had arisen, LPS had valued the land at £10,000 and DfC had confirmed that they were content for the sale to proceed and any capital receipts retained by Libraries NI.
- 4.5 The Chairperson commented that while the additional income was welcome Libraries NI were still in a difficult financial position.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2023

BSC.02.01.24

- 5.1 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor P Johnston, the minutes of the meeting of the Business Support Committee on 30 November 2023, were approved as a correct record of the meeting. It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting on 14 December 2023.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BSC.03.01.24
MEETING HELD ON 30 NOVEMBER 2023

- 6.1 The Director of Business Support advised that Committee/Board Effectiveness Review 2023 was due to be completed at this meeting and would be dealt with under item 7.
- 6.2 The Director of Business Support advised that the Health and Safety Policy, Environmental Policy and Equal Opportunity Policy had been adopted by the Board of Libraries NI at its meeting of 14 December 2023, made available to staff and published as appropriate.
- 6.3 The Director of Business Support reported that the Libraries NI Statutory Equality and Good Relations Annual Report 2022/23 had been approved and adopted by the Board of Libraries NI at its meeting of 14 December 2023 and had been submitted to the Equality Commission NI.

7 COMMITTEE/BOARD EFFECTIVENESS BSC.04.01.24
REVIEW 2023/24

- 7.1 The Director of Business Support reported that the annual Board and Committee Effectiveness Review had commenced, the draft report and any action plan arising would need to be brought to the Board on 14 February 2024 to meet the reporting timeframe. Consequently the Committee were asked to:-
1. consider the current Scheme of Delegation, confirm that it remained relevant and appropriate or advise of revisions
 2. consider the draft Effectiveness Review with a view to agreeing a combined response representative of the view of the Committee, identifying any actions to be brought forward for inclusion in the Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan.
- 7.2 The Chief Executive advised that in the Scheme of Delegation at 3.2 the reference to DCAL should be amended to DfC.
- 7.3 Mrs W Osborne referenced the Effectiveness Review point 8 regarding keeping abreast of relevant developments in the broader library world and enquired if members received professional library magazines.
- 7.4 The Chief Executive advised that professional magazines were available from his office, and it had been proposed that a compendium of relevant articles be compiled and circulated on a half yearly basis.
- 7.5 The Chairperson welcomed proposal, which was an efficient way to keep members updated.

- 7.6 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal, the Scheme of Delegation was confirmed as remaining relevant and appropriate and no revisions were required other than correcting a reference at 3.2 from DCAL to read DFC and the 2023/24 Business Support Committee Effectiveness Review Report was approved.
- 7.7 The Committee agreed that the Director of Business Support would compile a summary report to be forwarded to the Board for consideration at its February 2024 meeting.

8 ENGAGEMENT OF AGENCY WORKERS BSC.05.01.24
POLICY REVIEW

- 8.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Engagement of Agency Workers Policy which had been reviewed in keeping with best practice and the scheduled review period. There were no substantive revisions proposed other than to update relevant dates and titles/terminology.
- 8.2 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Engagement of Agency Workers Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

9 **CUSTOMER FEEDBACK REPORT 2023** **BSC.06.01.24**

- 9.1 The Director of Business Support presented the Customer Feedback Report 2023 which detailed the volume of feedback received from library service users, the nature and the focus of the feedback and included examples of feedback received, the subject matter and responses provided for the period from 01 October 2022 to 30 September 2023. The feedback was a valuable point of contact and continued to inform services moving forward.
- 9.2 Councillor P Johnston commented that the Report highlighted lots of good news and some challenges, given that people are far more likely to record a complaint than a compliment it was encouraging that the quantity of compliments substantially outweighed that of complaints.
- 9.3 Councillor M McRandal commented that quantitative information regarding the subject matter of complaints would be useful and enquired if processes were in place requesting feedback.
- 9.4 The Director of Business Support advised that general feedback was initiated by library users, a more forward approach was taken to events and tailored services when feedback was actively sought from attendees. A breakdown by subject matter could be provided.

- 9.5 The Chief Executive advised that a customer survey was carried out periodically and had last been done in 2022, as well as the annual continuous household survey which covers the wider public sector and for major initiatives there would be public consultation.
- 9.6 Mrs W Osborne advised that she would also like more information regarding the subject matter of complaints and noted that the decrease in compliments and increase in complaints can be associated with downturn in funding and the complaint at 9.1 emphasised this issue.
- 9.7 The Chief Executive commented that the complaints detailed at 8.6 and 8.7 also highlight the correlation between the budget situation and increase in complaints.
- 9.8 Members noted the Report.

10 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/SECURITY RELATED POLICIES - REVIEW

- 10.1 The Head of ICT/ICU presented a suite of eight policies which provided direction and guidance to users of Libraries NI information and information systems and the security controls that are to be implemented and complied with to support our approach to cyber security, secure information management and use of IT systems for legitimate business purposes. The policies were:-

- Information Technology Security Policy
- Server Security Policy
- Network Security Policy
- Microsoft Windows Client Security Policy
- Application Security Policy
- Internet Security Policy
- Staff Acceptable Use Policy
- Library Computers Conditions of Use Policy

These policies had been reviewed, there were minor revisions to reflect technological changes and best practice.

10.2 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY POLICY BSC.07.01.24

- 10.3 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Information Technology Security Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

- 10.4 SERVER SECURITY POLICY BSC.08.01.24**
- 10.5 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor P Johnston the Server Security Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 10.6 NETWORK SECURITY POLICY BSC.09.01.24**
- 10.7 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor P Johnston the Network Security Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 10.8 MICROSOFT WINDOWS CLIENT SECURITY POLICY BSC.10.01.24**
- 10.9 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Microsoft Windows Client Security Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 10.10 APPLICATION SECURITY POLICY BSC.11.01.24**
- 10.11 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Application Security Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 10.12 INTERNET SECURITY POLICY BSC.12.01.24**
- 10.13 On a proposal by Councillor M McRandal, seconded by Councillor P Johnston the Internet Security Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 10.14 STAFF ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY BSC.13.01.24**
- 10.15 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Staff Acceptable Use Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.
- 10.16 LIBRARY COMPUTERS CONDITIONS OF USE POLICY BSC.14.01.24**
- 10.17 On a proposal by Councillor P Johnston, seconded by Councillor M McRandal the Library Computers Conditions of Use Policy was approved and recommended to the Board for adoption.

**11 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2023/24 –
PROGRESS REPORT**

BSC.15.01.24

- 11.1 The Assets Manager presented the Progress Report updating the Committee on progress to date in delivering the Property Maintenance and Capital Development Programme 2023/24. The resource maintenance budget was projected to be fully expended by 31 March 2024 on response maintenance and statutory requirement, no additional funding had become available for planned maintenance projects. The initial capital funding allocation was sufficient to continue with two contractually committed projects, Fivemiletown replacement library facilities and E3 IT infrastructure. During the year additional capital funding had been received which had allowed health and safety projects to proceed. Libraries NI had been successful in securing funding from DfE's Energy Invest to Save Programme for three low carbon retrofit projects to refurbish three libraries with the aim of achieving extremely low energy consumption. Meetings were held with DfC every two months to keep them informed of progress. The capital expenditure budget was projecting a small underspend of £71,000 at 31 March 2024.
- 11.2 Miss L Wilson enquired regarding the underspend in percentage terms and noted that the Killyleagh Library project had been funded by DfE and DfC have allocated funding for next year.
- 11.3 The Assets Manager confirmed that the £71,000 projected underspend equated to 0.9%.
- 11.4 Councillor M McRandal noted that with regard to E3, Fivemiletown and Killyleagh what was budgeted was being spent in the current year and enquired if there would be budget cover to complete the projects in the following year.
- 11.5 The Director of Business Support advised that these were multiple year projects, while DfC operate a single year funding mechanism providing funding for the current year. The Killyleagh Library Project had been funded by DfE Invest to Save Programme and while there had been some delay in receiving DfC approval of the supporting business case, funding to complete the project would be made available in 2024/25.
- 11.6 Mrs W Osborne commented on the additional capital funding received on an ad hoc basis and the need to note that this was almost impossible. She welcomed the three low carbon retrofit projects to refurbish three libraries as a news-worthy story.
- 11.7 The Chief Executive advised that when the three low carbon refurbishment projects were complete an event would be organised to publicise them as sustainable libraries.
- 11.8 Members noted the Report.

12 INFORMATION SYSTEMS E3 PROGRAMME BSC.16.01.24
UPDATE REPORT JANUARY 2023

12.1 The Head of ICU/ICT presented the Information Systems E3 Programme Update Report advising Members of progress made. Work on Key Milestone A – Operability Milestones was complete, work was continuing on Key Milestone B – Library Management System, a card payment pilot had started in January 2024 and gone well, work was continuing on Finance, HR and Recruitment systems.

12.2 Members noted the Report.

13 FINANCE REPORTS

13.1 RESOURCE EXPENDITURE REPORT TO BSC.17.01.24
DECEMBER 2023

13.2 The Finance Manager presented the Resource Expenditure Report to 31 December 2023, detailing expenditure incurred to date and additional funding received in December 2023. Projections indicated a potential underspend of 0.6% of budget at 31 March 2024.

13.3 The Chairperson enquired how the stock allocation was being spent and if there was likely to be any more funding.

13.4 The Director of Business Support reported that as much physical stock as possible within the timeframe was being purchased, electronic stock was available to be bought almost immediately. There was no indication of any further funding being available.

13.5 Members noted the Report.

13.6 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE REPORT TO BSC.18.01.24
DECEMBER 2023

13.7 The Finance Manager presented the Capital Expenditure Report advising of expenditure to 31 December 2023.

13.8 Members noted the Report.

14 PROCUREMENT REPORT – TENDERS OVER £1,000 BSC.19.01.24
AND SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS OVER £1,000

14.1 The Finance Manager presented the Procurement Report updating the Committee on procurement activity over £1,000 and Single Tender Actions for the period from 18 November 2023 to 12 January 2024.

14.2 The Chairperson noted that Children's Resilience Events had been organised and enquired how this fitted with Libraries NI's remit.

- 14.3 The Director of Business Support advised that it was likely there had been specific funding for the provision of these events, he would check and confirm the details.
- 14.4 The Chief Executive advised that Libraries NI had a remit and broad responsibility to provide services to children. Staff had chosen Action Mental Health as Libraries NI's charity and AMH had delivered these events.
- 14.5 Members noted the Report.

Councillor P Johnston left the meeting at 11:50am

15 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT TO DECEMBER 2023 BSC.20.01.24

- 15.1 The Head of Human Resources presented the Sickness Absence Report advising that the sickness absence level for the 12 months up to 31 December 2023 was 12.91 days (FTE equivalent). The target set for 2023/24 was to maintain sickness absence (composite average FTE days lost) at or below 11.5 days by 31 March 2024. While the level of sickness had decreased it was still not achieving the target, the Branch Library Manager's industrial action was impacting the management of absence, training would be key and had been organised for District Managers for June 2024.
- 15.2 Councillor M McRandal tentatively welcomed the downward trend in the level of absence and enquired regarding the unclassified long term sickness absences.
- 15.3 The Head of Human Resources advised that the nature of the "unclassified" illnesses was known but they were "unclassified" as they did not fit into one of the NISRA categories.
- 15.4 Mrs W Osborne commented that the impact of current industrial action could be seen, that training was important and noted the level of work related stress.
- 15.5 The Head of Human Resources advised that the Organisational Structure Review would align resources with current and future service provision and hopefully see a reduction in work related stress.
- 15.6 The Director of Business Support advised that several stress related absences were linked to ongoing disciplinary/HR processes.
- 15.7 Mrs W Osborne commented that it would be important to ensure that this did not become the culture which would be difficult to change.

- 15.8 Miss L Wilson enquired if there was a network of contacts with other public sector organisations for sharing information.
- 15.9 The Head of Human Resources advised that she attended the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and also had good contacts with EA.
- 15.10 The Chief Executive reported that DfC were very keen that ALBs link up to share information and learning.
- 15.11 Members noted the Report.

16 TENDER REPORTS

BALLYNAHINCH LIBRARY ROOF UPGRADE PROJECT **BSC.21.01.24**

WATERSIDE LIBRARY HEATING UPGRADE PROJECT **BSC.22.01.24**

- 16.1 The Assets Manager presented the tender reports for Ballynahinch Libraries Roof Upgrade Project and Waterside Library Heating Upgrade Project advising on the outcome of the procurement exercises.
- 16.2 Miss L Wilson noted that the tender for the Ballynahinch Project was higher than anticipated and enquired if estimates take account of inflationary costs.
- 16.3 The Assets Manager advised that estimates do take account of inflationary costs and that the chosen contractor had provided a competitive price.
- 16.4 Members noted the Reports.

17 REPORT ON THE USE OF THE COMMON SEAL **BSC.23.01.24**

- 17.1 The Director of Business Support drew the Committee's attention to the Report on the Use of Common Seal, detailing the two occasions on which the Seal of the Northern Ireland Library Authority had been applied between November 2023 and January 2024.
- 17.2 Members noted the Report.

18 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS


- 18.1 The Director of Business Support confirmed that Children's Resilience Events detailed in the Procurement Report had been supported by Digital Inclusion Funding from DoF. The events were recorded, available digitally and a short film had been made which detailed self-help steps to improve mental health.

19 DATE OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

- 19.1 Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Business Support Committee would be hold on Thursday 28 March 2024 at 10:30am.

20 MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 20.1 The meeting ended at 12:20pm
- 20.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the following exceptions: -
- Councillor P Johnston left at 11:50am

Signed 

Date 28 MARCH 2024