

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held in Dungiven Library
on Thursday 15 May 2025 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Mr John Peto	Chairperson
Ms Bonnie Anley	Chairperson of Board
Councillor Julie Gilmour	
Councillor Rosie Kinnear	
Councillor Andrew McAuley	
Mrs Wendy Osborne	

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
Ms Margaret Bell	Head of Service
Ms Julie Reid	Head of Service
Ms Kim Keys	Deputy Head of Service
Mr Glenn Beattie	Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications
Mr Paul Kelly	Senior Services Manager
Ms Fiona McCallum	Area Manager
Ms Linzie King	District Manager
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting. In particular, Ms Fiona McCallum, Area Manager and Ms Linzie King, District Manager, who were attending as observers.

Fiona McCallum, Area Manager, welcomed the Services Committee to Dungiven Library, she informed Members of the emergency exits and facilities and noted that a tour of the library would be provided following the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Mr Adrian Driscoll.

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 The Chairperson informed the Services Committee that his term as Chairperson would end at the next meeting on 18 September 2025.

4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

SC.01.05.25

- 4.1 The Director of Library Services referred to the report that had been circulated and drew attention to the briefing paper on Dungiven Library and Library Services in the Causeway Coast and Glens Area, which was included for background. She also offered Members the opportunity for a tour of Coleraine Library and/or Ballymoney Library in the afternoon.
- 4.2 Ms A Adair informed Members that the Summer opening hours schedule will commence on Monday 30 June through to Saturday 30 August 2025 and that customer messaging and staff FAQs were in place. She then referred Members to the key findings of the Free Period Products Survey 2024 that was conducted across a range of libraries.
- 4.3 The Director of Library Services highlighted the People Make Central Drive Exhibition by Féile Derry, a new outdoor exhibition showcasing the people who make Central Drive such a vital and vibrant part of the Creggan community. The exhibition is displayed outside Holy Child Primary School and features 60 portraits of local schoolchildren, teachers, youth workers and community champions including Glenn Foley, Library Manager, Creggan Library.
- 4.4 The Director of Library Services gave an update on Death Positive Libraries, an initiative developed in partnership with Macmillan and supported by the Northern Trust. Magherafelt and Draperstown libraries recently joined the growing network of Death Positive Libraries across Northern Ireland (Belfast Central, Cookstown, Derry Central and Newry City libraries) offering valuable resources to help individuals and families explore one of life's most difficult topics. These collections, together with collections in Enniskillen, Lisnaskea and Omagh libraries provided by the Art of Life Project are designed to make conversations around death, dying and bereavement more accessible.
- 4.5 Ms A Adair went on to give an update on the DeafBlind UK initiative funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The initiative links people living with sensory loss to vital resources and guidance. DeafBlind UK has commenced the implementation of dedicated information points in Antrim, Dungannon, Glengormley and Magherafelt libraries.
- 4.6 The Director of Library Services informed Members that Ms J McFrederick, Stock and Reader Development Services Manager, will feature on the BBC Radio Ulster light entertainment 'Peter Cinnamon Show' in a weekly slot to discuss reading and to recommend books to listeners. The show will be broadcast every

Saturday afternoon at 4:00pm from 10 June until mid-August. Each week, Jillian will choose a different book genre to discuss, recommending authors and specific titles to inspire listeners to pick up a book, or download an eBook or eAudiobook.

- 4.7 The Director of Library Services then went on to highlight two new partnership initiatives. RNIB and Share the Vision representatives visited Antrim Library on 1 May to film the library resources and visually impaired customer interviews as content for Share the Vision's social media platforms promoting library services for visually impaired service users. This is part of a nationwide project with film footage from Bath Central, Orkney and Swansea Central libraries also being used. She then outlined the Study Breaks which took place in Omagh and Lisburn City libraries on 6 and 9 May respectively, in partnership with the Open University. The Open University student wellbeing and support team shared essential study advice and support with students and pointed them to the Libraries NI OpenLearn Learning Hub for further resources. The resources on the Learning Hub include top exam revision tips, how to beat procrastination and coping with exam stress. Library staff highlighted material available to support students and emphasised key areas of support that the library can provide, for example, the Out of Hours facility available in Omagh Library for studying.
- 4.8 The Director of Library Services informed the Services Committee that 68 libraries had ad hoc closures during 2024/25. She highlighted that the total of 1,062 hours and 15 minutes equates to 0.83% of the total library opening hours available.
- 4.9 Ms A Adair highlighted Libraries NI's participation and support of the following recent and forthcoming events:
- Autism Awareness Day, 2 April 2025
 - Belfast Learning Festival, 9 – 13 April 2025
 - NSPCC Let's Talk PANTS Fundays, May 2025
 - 80th Anniversary of VE Day, 8 May 2025
 - Dementia Action Week, 19 – 25 May 2025
 - World Menstrual Hygiene Day, 28 May 2025
 - Big Summer Read 2025
 - Hi-Vis, 1 - 15 June 2025
 - Empathy Festival, 2 – 12 June 2025 and Empathy Day, 12 June 2025
 - Loneliness Awareness Week, 9 – 15 June 2025
 - Refugee Week, 15 – 21 June 2025.
- Exhibitions in libraries during May were also noted.
- 4.10 The Director of Library Services reported that Libraries NI will support its official charity partner, Action Mental Health, in their initiative to promote positive mental health during Mental Health Awareness Week, 12 - 18 May 2025. The Big Family Switch off will encourage a break from digital devices and every library will promote dedicated time for customers to visit and engage in a range of activities such as board games, storytelling, reading, mindfulness and journaling. Following a discussion, she clarified that the initiative was Action Mental Health's and that Libraries NI would promote the participation to include carers and individuals.

- 4.11 Ms A Adair gave an overview of Libraries NI's participation in the following meetings, projects and conferences:
- Shared Island Project
 - EDGE Conference 2025
 - LAI/CILIP Ireland Annual Joint Conference
 - Northern Regional College
 - Libraries NI/CILIP Pathways
 - Ards and North Down Borough Council Community Planning 10 Year Summit
 - Erasmus+ Study Visit to the Netherlands.
- 4.12 The Director of Library Services highlighted links to recent publications in the English public library sector and Services Committee Members responded that the reports did not align with use of libraries by young people in Northern Ireland.
- 4.13 The Services Committee thanked the Director of Library Services and noted the Director's Business report.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2025 SC.03.05.25

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor A McAuley, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 20 March 2025 were approved as a correct record of the meeting. It was reported that these minutes had been adopted by the Board at its meeting held on 17 April 2025.

6. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 The Director of Library Services reminded Members of the enquiry at the previous Services Committee about Libraries NI's dependency on the Education Authority (EA) as the Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE). She advised that the issue of the lack of capacity by the EA to complete the Ballycastle Library project was unfortunate timing so close to the financial year end and the aftermath of Storm Éowyn. Ms A Adair confirmed that an alternative option of a Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD) model was also available to Libraries NI but would likely not have met the time constraints of the project either.
- 6.2 In response to the comments by Services Committee Members that the level of detail in the Libraries NI and Rural Communities Report gave a greater insight into the due regard of rural needs and therefore would be useful to append to the Rural Needs Annual Report, the Director of Library Services confirmed that additional information could not be submitted with the template provided. However, she assured Members that regular meetings are held between Libraries NI and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and that Libraries NI avails of that platform to showcase services and initiatives supporting rural dwellers.

7. DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2025/26 AND RISK REGISTER

SC.04.05.25

- 7.1 Ms J Reid, Head of Service, presented the draft Service Plan 2025/26 which identifies targets in line with the draft Business Plan and draft Corporate Plan which was presented to the Board in April 2025. The Head of Service informed Members that the draft Services Plan was subject to refinements pending confirmation of a final budget allocation and that it would be presented again to Services Committee when the budget was finalised.
- 7.2 Ms J Reid highlighted a number of significant elements of the Service Plan such as delivery of the year-two action plan of the Reading and Reader Development Strategy including the launch of a new radio broadcast featuring the Stock and Reader Development Services Manager and promotion of the benefits of reading for pleasure to parents, carers and teachers. She went on to outline the focus of the Big Summer Read 2025 on building a daily reading habit and distributed draft promotional material to Members. The Head of Service also drew attention to the following targets and initiatives:
- celebrations to mark 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth
 - delivery of year-three of the Ormeau Road Library of Sanctuary action plan
 - train 12 staff to OCN NI Level 2 Oral Skills for Storytelling
 - establish 12 adult storytelling groups
 - increase library membership and participation
 - Free Access to Period Products
 - Public Library Standard on stock spend
 - approach to tackling climate change.
- 7.3 Services Committee discussed a number of targets in the draft Service Plan and received clarification in relation to the Public Library Standard for stock spend, Libraries NI's work with RAISE, Key Performance Indicators and development of a Children and Young People's Strategy.
- 7.4 Ms M Bell, Head of Service, presented the risk register which details the risks identified in relation to the draft Services Directorate Services Plan for 2025/26. Ms M Bell outlined each risk, highlighting any change in the risk status and the associated actions to mitigate the risks.
- 7.5 Services Committee discussed the risks in relation to information security, in particular cyber security. The Chief Executive reassured Members that the risk is monitored and reviewed by the ICU and IT Department. In response to questions in light of the recent cyber-attack on Marks and Spencer and CO-OP the Chief Executive agreed to ask the Head of ICU and ICT to consider the wider aspect of Business Continuity and the impact of a cyber-attack.
- 7.6 On a proposal by Mrs W Osborne, seconded by Ms B Anley, the Services Committee approved the draft Service Plan 2025/26 and Risk Register.

8. ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN 2024/25

SC.05.05.25

- 8.1 Mr G Beattie, Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications, referred to the report that had been circulated providing an update on the Advertising Campaign 2024/25. He set the context of the campaign to achieve maximum benefit with a limited resource allocation and outlined the procurement process in which Libraries NI is bound by.
- 8.2 Mr G Beattie highlighted the key goals of the campaign to increase membership on the previous year and to increase the reach across the social media platforms that Libraries NI advertises on. He outlined the mediums used:
- 20 Adshels in key locations
 - Radio broadcasts across Cool FM, Downtown, Q Radio and U105
 - Influencer Video - Melissa Riddell, Cool FM presenter
 - Digital Direct via The Belfast Telegraph website
 - Social Media.
- 8.3 The Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications informed Members of the overall results highlighting a 9% increase in membership on the previous year and a 5% increase in social media growth over February and March compared with the same period the previous year. He also drew on the key findings, conclusions drawn and lessons learned from the campaign.
- 8.4 The Services Committee acknowledged the constraints of the resourcing available and were encouraged by the impact achieved. The Chairperson thanked Mr G Beattie for the report on the Advertising Campaign 2024/25.

9. eBOOK PRESENTATION

- 9.1 Ms J Reid introduced the eBook presentation and set the scene by confirming that there was no statute for public libraries to provide eBooks and explaining the exclusions and restrictions that apply to public libraries. She highlighted the increasing demand for eResources and the difficulties in meeting demand with an insufficient stock budget allocation.
- 9.2 The Head of Service outlined the various models of licences available for publishers to sell eBooks to public libraries with examples of licences used by popular publishers. She went on to show a comparison of the cost of 20 popular titles in hardcopy/paperback compared to an eBook and eAudiobook highlighting that the information was commercial in confidence.
- 9.3 Ms J Reid drew attention to the ongoing work across Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, nationally and internationally and collaborative working across library sectors to raise awareness of the issues she outlined. She also referred to the Libraries Connected Project Board that she was part of and highlighted significant publications across both professional and mainstream press.

9.4 The Services Committee thanked the Head of Service for a very informative presentation and commended the Stock Team in providing a comprehensive catalogue of eResources in a challenging environment.

10. SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2024/25 SC.06.05.25

10.1 Ms K Keys, Deputy Head of Service, presented the Service Plan Progress Report 2024/25 which demonstrates progress on achieving targets as at 31 March 2025. She reported that the majority of targets were achieved and provided the context and rationale for those that were not achieved. She also gave examples of progress towards achievement on targets that were not met but substantially achieved.

10.2 The Deputy Head of Service highlighted significant achievements and successes such as:

- Book Week NI, Big Summer Read, World Book Day Online event
- stakeholder and community engagement, preview events, formal launches of the new Fivemiletown Library and retrofits of Ballymoney, Bessbrook and Killyleagh libraries
- Tracks from the Past inaugural Cultural Heritage Festival, Fivemiletown
- Family Fundays, Creggan and Waterside libraries
- Making a Difference quarterly Newsletter
- Learn@Lunch, Give it a Go, Safer Internet Day
- Children's Mental Health Week, Good Relations Week, free period products in libraries
- CustomerFirst Strategy.

10.3 Services Committee Members discussed approaches to positive climate change and sought clarification on the funding of digitising library resources. The Services Committee thanked Ms K Keys and noted the Service Plan Progress Report 2024/25.

11. LEARN AT LUNCH, MOVE WITH LIBRARIES NI AND MINDFULNESS INITIATIVES AT LIBRARIES NI

11.1 Mr P Kelly, Senior Services Manager, Online Services and Services Support, introduced the presentation that he delivered at a plenary session at the Library Association of Ireland/CILIP Ireland Joint Annual Conference 2025.

11.2 The Senior Services Manager set the context of the development of online activities since the COVID-19 pandemic, how Libraries NI provides support for people who are digitally excluded, the expansion of Libraries NI's online service offer and lessons learned to date.

11.3 Mr P Kelly gave examples of the various programmes delivered including Yoga, Mindfulness, Happiness Labs, a virtual choir, cookery demonstrations and the

newly introduced and very successful Learn at Lunch learning opportunities, a series of 30 minute online workshops and micro-lectures on creative writing through environmental issues, writing science fiction and photography delivered by experienced facilitators.

- 11.4 The Senior Services Manager highlighted the positive impact of online programming by sharing feedback from participants and reported a high number of repeat attenders. He also shared topics for planned future sessions including AI and streaming.
- 11.5 A discussion followed and the Services Committee commended the successful achievement over a short time frame, acknowledging the value of the positive feedback. In response to a question, Mr P Kelly agreed to consider the potential for storytelling sessions in partnership with the Armstrong Storytelling Trust (AST) as a potential Learn at Lunch offer. The Director of Library Services also agreed to share a link to the AST website and add upcoming events to the Director's Business report.
- 11.6 On behalf of the Services Committee the Chairperson thanked Mr P Kelly for the presentation.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 There was no other business.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would be held on Thursday 18 September 2025 at 10:30am in Lisburn City Library with the option to attend remotely.

14. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

- 14.1 The meeting ended at 1:15pm and was followed by a tour of Dungiven Library.
- 14.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of:
- Councillor Rosie Kinnear, left at 1:00pm.