

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held remotely via Zoom
on Thursday 18 September 2025 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Mr John Peto	Chairperson
Mr Adrian Driscoll	
Councillor Julie Gilmour	
Councillor Rosie Kinnear	
Councillor Andrew McAuley	
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	

IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Jim O'Hagan	Chief Executive
Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
Ms Julie Reid	Head of Service
Ms Ciara Gault	Deputy Head of Service
Mr Glenn Beattie	Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular he welcomed Ms Ciara Gault, to her first meeting of the Services Committee in her role as Deputy Head of Service.

The Director of Library Services notified Members that the Presentation on Erasmus+ Study Visit to the Netherlands would be deferred to a future meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Ms B Anley.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Director of Library Services 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

Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson **SC.01.09.25**

- 3.1 Mr J Peto reflected on his term as Chairperson of Services Committee and in line with the rotation policy as set out in Standing Orders, proposed Vice-Chairperson Councillor A McAuley for the position of Chairperson. Councillor Julie Gilmour seconded the proposal and Councillor A McAuley took the role of Chairperson.
- 3.2 Councillor A McAuley, in his position as Chairperson, sought nominations from Committee Members of an Independent Member for the position of Vice-Chairperson. Councillor A McAuley proposed Mr A Driscoll and Ms W Osborne OBE seconded the proposal. There being no further proposals, Mr A Driscoll was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the Services Committee.
- 3.3 The Chairperson, thanked Mr J Peto for his service as Chairperson and welcomed Mr A Driscoll to the position of Vice-Chairperson.

4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

SC.02.09.25

- 4.1 The Director of Library Services extended thanks to the Mr J Peto for his support and welcomed the opportunity to work with the New Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.
- 4.2 Ms A Adair then referred to the report that had been circulated. She highlighted the Ministerial launch of the Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030, Delivering for People, Delivering for Communities and gave Members an overview of the programme.
- 4.2 The Director of Library Services confirmed that all libraries returned to standard opening hours on 1 September 2025 and reported that Ballycastle Library closed on 8 September for approximately six weeks for refurbishment to refresh the staff area, interior and exterior painting and new carpet together with spatial reorganisation which will allow a more flexible layout accommodating a defined cultural heritage area, event and gallery space, reading zone and increased children's space. She also reported on the successful community engagement event that took place with the Ballycastle community on 4 September to provide feedback on current library events, input into desired programming and discuss a preferred range of opening hours. She also noted that a new Cultural Heritage Festival for the area was in development.
- 4.3 The Director of Library Services reminded Members of the Creative Space initiative at Omagh Library. She informed Members that Clive McFarland, a children's author/illustrator, who was awarded the bursary in both April 2023 and April 2024 has been successful in his application for the use of the space from April 2025 to March 2026. She highlighted the success of collaboration with Mr McFarland on a number of projects. Ms A Adair further reported that a bursary has been awarded to Kal McBride for 2025/26, Kal has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Illustration and Graphic Design as well as being an aspiring artist.

- 4.4 The Director of Library Services provided Members with an initial analysis of the Big Summer Read 2025 and confirmed that a full report will be brought to a future meeting of the Services Committee.
- 4.5 She then went on to highlight that on 28 May 2025 a celebration was held in Lisburn City Library to mark one year since the launch of the Free Period Products initiative in libraries across Northern Ireland.
- 4.6 The Director of Library Services drew attention to successful partnership initiatives between Libraries NI and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, for example, Take a Seat and Swap and Save – a uniform re-use scheme. She also highlighted the Community Garden initiative that was launched in Antrim Library in May 2025 and a Wildflower Grden that was in place at Greystone Library, encouraging Members to visit the gardens.
- 4.7 The Director of Library Services informed the Committee of a recent pop-up book sale held by Libraries NI on 14 June 2025 at the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast offering pre-loved titles withdrawn through our regular stock management process. The event offered the public the chance to fill a branded tote bag with pre-loved books for £10, or £8 for library members. The event was in line with Libraries NI’s approach to stock and sustainability, offered an opportunity to connect with readers in a different setting and welcome new faces to the library service. 31 new members registered on the day and a number of lapsed members re-activated their membership. The book sale generated £2,600 gross income.
- 4.8 Ms A Adair outlined the background to Tullycarnet Library and reported on Libraries NI’s participation in a housing led Place Shaping Plan in Tullycarnet since April 2024. The Place Shaping Plan aims to explore the social, economic, community and environmental regeneration potential of the area. The public engagement strand of the plan identified the lack of space for community groups in the area and Libraries NI has been working with the Tullycarnet Community Collective to support events and initiatives. A Use of Premises Agreement was agreed with the Community Collective to enable use of Tullycarnet Library on Friday 11 July to support a community festival family funday. The event was successful, with the library being used as a base for the organisers, First Aid facilities and access to bathrooms. Libraries NI will explore the potential to expand the use of the library on unstaffed days for other activities.
- 4.9 The Director of Library Services provided the context to ad hoc closures of libraries and noted a total of 86 hours and 45 minutes during quarter one of 2025/26 equating to 0.20% of the total library opening hours available, of which 5 hours 15 minutes was attributed to early closing of Ballymena and Larne libraries due to local civil disturbances.
- 4.10 Ms A Adair drew attention to the following recent events and Libraries NI’s participation:
- North West Migrants Forum - Black Heritage in NI: Hidden History Exhibition

- Belfast Pride 2025
- Silver Summer Scheme, in collaboration with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Find Your North of Ireland Ancestors, Mellon Centre for Migration Studies, 1 August 2025
- Dunbia Factory Outreach Visit, 8 August 2025
- Commemorative Plaque Unveiling, Falls Road Library, 13 August 2025
- Hands on History Launch, Queen's University Belfast, 22 August 2025
- Annual BookTrust Storytime Prize 2025/26
- 100th Anniversary of BookTrust and Queen's Storytime Room event
- Belfast Maritime Festival, 6 September 2025
- Roald Dahl Day, 13 September 2025
- Belfast Central Library tours for European Heritage Open Days, 13 – 14 September 2025.

4.11 The Director of Library Services then referred to forthcoming events and initiatives. She highlighted the Armstrong Storytelling Trust (AST) events in Bangor Carnegie, Lisburn City and Tullycarnet libraries and the AST funded Libraries NI's Storyteller in Residence, Liz Weir. She suggested inviting Roger Armstrong, AST founder, to meet the Services Committee.

4.12 Ms A Adair also highlighted the following:

- Culture Night Belfast, 19 September 2025
- Alzheimer's Awareness Day, 21 September 2025
- Workshop for programme planning of the Ulster American Heritage Symposium 2026, Planning Workshop, 22 September 2025
- Macmillan Coffee Morning 26 September 2025
- Emma Stebbins, 'Carving Out History' Exhibition, The Hecksher Museum of Art, New York, 28 September 2025 – 15 March 2026
- Positive Ageing Month, October 2025
- Good Relations Week, 13 - 19 October 2025
- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October 2025.

4.13 The Director of Library Services then provided an overview of the attendance of Libraries NI's officers at recent conferences and strategic meetings, including:

- DAERA, Rural Policy Forum, 2 July 2025
- British Library, Public Libraries Partnership Strategic Group, 7 July 2025
- Department for Communities, Arts Council NI and Making Music, 14 August 2025
- Libraries Connected Advisory Committee, 19 August 2025.

Ms A Adair also highlighted that the Communities Minister Mr Gordon Lyons MLA would be visiting Belfast Central Library on the afternoon of 18 September 2025 for the first time. She noted that he would receive a tour of the building and Fine Book Room and that there would be a photo opportunity.

- 4.14 The Director of Library Services then referred to the appendices of the Director's Business report, including the exhibitions in libraries during September and the article published in the CILIP Information Professional Autumn edition by Sarah-Jayne Hughes, Communications Officer, Setting the Standard: Libraries NI leads the way with UK's first EnerPHit-certified public building.
- 4.15 The Chairperson thanked the Director of Library Services for the comprehensive report.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2025 SC.03.09.25

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Mr J Peto, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 15 May 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 3 July 2025.

6. MATTERS ARISING

- 6.1 The Director of Library Services confirmed that a Cyber Incident Response Plan has been developed and now forms part of the Business Continuity Framework. At the request of Mr A Driscoll it was agreed that a copy of the Business Continuity Plan would be made available.
- 6.2 Ms A Adair also confirmed that the Online Services and Service Support Team are in contact with the Armstrong Storytelling Trust to explore including storytelling sessions as part of the Learn @ Lunch 2026 programme which is currently being planned.

7. PRESENTATION ON BOOK WEEK NI 2025

- 7.1 Ms J Reid, Head of Service, presented on Book Week NI, which will run from Monday 20 to Sunday 26 of October 2025. She highlighted that Book Week NI 2025 will be celebrating 10 years of the partnership initiative between Libraries NI and the BBC in Northern Ireland focussing on the importance of books, writers, reading and libraries. The Head of Service reported that Book Week has become an established feature in the cultural calendar of Northern Ireland and creates invaluable exposure of Libraries NI to a mainstream BBC audience across Northern Ireland, with BBC augmenting much of its high-profile radio and television programming with content relating to books, reading and libraries.
- 7.2 The Head of Service informed Members that she was highlighting a number of selected headline events to give a flavour of what's happening for Book Week and that every library will be participating in Book Week hosting local events.

- 7.3 Ms J Reid gave an overview of Libraries NI's podcast, Bookcited! which will have a daily release featuring some of the authors who will be involved in events throughout Book Week. She then outlined events with high-profile authors including Wendy Erskine, Garrett Carr, Glenn Patterson, Elly Griffiths, Jo Spain and Piers Torday. The Head of Service also informed Services Committee of a new family event this year, Library Con taking place on Saturday 25 October, with a focus on comics and graphic novels.
- 7.4 The highlighted events reflected the breadth of the Book Week programme featuring events for people of all ages with award winning authors facilitated by renowned BBC personalities.
- 7.5 The Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications confirmed that promotion of events had commenced on Libraries NI's website and social media platforms and that an email would be issued from libraries to local stakeholders. He informed the Committee that 135 local events have already been recorded on the events database and confirmed that he would circulate a link to the events to Board Members. Mr G Beattie noted the valuable support received from Board Members in previous years interacting on social media platforms and attending events. In response to a question, Mr G Beattie shared examples of how Board Members can actively participate and support Book Week via social media.
- 7.6 The Chairperson thanked both Ms J Reid and Mr G Beattie for a very comprehensive presentation.

8. DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2025/26 SC.04.09.25

- 8.1 The Director of Library Services introduced the draft Service Plan for 2025/26 which was being presented for approval following a financial allocation for 2025/26 and in line with the Business Plan which was presented to the Board in July 2025.
- 8.2 She reported on minor updates including the Key Performance Indicator to 'Deliver 700 learning opportunities aimed at improving digital literacy by 31 March 2026' and an amendment to the date of the triennial Customer Survey which will take place in October instead of September. Ms A Adair confirmed that a full update on progress of the service plan as at the end of quarter two would be presented to the Services Committee in November.
- 8.3 Mr A Driscoll drew attention to a typo at target 4.3 which was noted for correction.
- 8.4 On a proposal by Mr A Driscoll, seconded by Mr J Peto, the Services Committee approved the Service Plan 2025/26.

9. PRESENTATION ON ERASMUS+ STUDY VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS

- 9.1 As notified at the start of the meeting, this item was deferred to a future meeting.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 There was no other business.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Services Committee would take place on Thursday 20 November 2025 at 10:30am in The Writers' Room at Belfast Central Library.

11.2 The Director of Library Services confirmed that the Committee would receive a presentation from CILIP President, Sue Lacey-Bryant and that items from the Fine Book Room would be available for Committee Members to view.

12. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

12.1 The meeting ended at 11:34am.

12.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.