

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held remotely via Zoom
on Thursday 16 January 2025 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Mr John Peto Chairperson
Ms Bonnie Anley
Mr Adrian Driscoll
Councillor Julie Gilmour
Councillor Andrew McAuley

IN ATTENDANCE

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

IN ATTENDANCE FOR PRESENTATION ONLY

Mr Louis Coiffait-Gunn Chief Executive, CILIP
Ms Brid Steele Service Development Manager
Ms Ciara Gault Service Development Manager
Ms Kirsty McClelland Service Development Manager

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting. In particular, he welcomed Louis Coiffait-Gunn, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and thanked him for attending the meeting to make a presentation.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Councillor R Kinnear and Mrs W Osborne.

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. THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

- 3.1 The Chairperson introduced Mr L Coiffait-Gunn, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). Mr Coiffait-Gunn gave a presentation to the Committee outlining how CILIP supports public libraries across the UK.
- 3.2 Mr L Coiffait-Gunn gave an overview of the opportunities and threats to public libraries highlighting the importance of a flexible approach in order to adapt to changing environments. He outlined initiatives such as A Million Decisions and Facts Matter and described approaches to funding, raising the profile of libraries, the library profession and engaging with Government. He referred to a new Toolkit, CILIP Connect: Building positive relationships with political representatives, a member benefit that offers resources, key messages and guidance with the aim of supporting librarians of all sectors to contact the national government, local MPs, members of the House of Lords, devolved members, local authority councillors and officials.
- 3.3 Mr L Coiffait-Gunn informed the Committee of recent case studies, acknowledging Libraries NI's input to Libraries Change Lives and welcomed further submissions highlighting the value of evidence based user stories. He then notified Services Committee of forthcoming events, conferences and training opportunities. Mr L Coiffait-Gunn also provided an overview of a pilot project trialling eBook licensing business models in a selection of library authorities in England with the aim of increasing affordability and availability of digital content to public library services.
- 3.4 In response to questions Mr L Coiffait-Gunn referred to a new framework that will be launched soon on working with school libraries and an approach to misinformation and interaction with Artificial Intelligence. He also referenced the strategic briefing that CILIP and public library sector stakeholders presented to the UK Minister of State for Media, Tourism and Creative Industries, outlining how libraries can play a pivotal role in helping the government achieve its five national missions with the paper emphasising how public libraries are uniquely positioned to contribute to national priorities such as economic growth, health and wellbeing, education, and social cohesion.
- 3.5 On behalf of the Services Committee and staff, the Chairperson thanked Mr L Coiffait-Gunn for a very relevant and informative presentation.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chairperson welcomed Mr A Driscoll to his first meeting of the Services Committee.

5. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

SC.01.01.25

- 5.1 The Director of Library Services referred to the report that had been circulated. She highlighted that additional in-year resource funding of £1.4 million had been allocated to stock purchasing from the Department for Communities and that, together with a further £180,000 internal resource reallocation, the 2024/25 stock budget is currently £2,824,000. It was noted that the allocation would be used for hard copy adult and children's fiction and non-fiction, large print, spoken word, local history materials, stock for prisons and eBook and eAudio book formats.
- 5.2 Ms A Adair reported that Libraries NI continues to work in partnership with The Executive Office (TEO) to deliver universal access to Free Period Products throughout the library network. A commissioning letter for funding for 2025/26 has been received from TEO and an action plan is being developed to support the funding bid for the incoming financial year. Activities are being considered to mark the first anniversary of the implementation of free period product legislation in Northern Ireland in May 2025.
- 5.3 The Director of Library Services drew attention to the Department for Communities publication of Engagement in Culture, Arts, Heritage and Sport by Adults in Northern Ireland from the findings of the Continuous Household Survey 2023/24. She reported that in 2023/24, 23% of the adult population had used the public library service at least once within the previous year, similar to the 2022/23 figure of 22%. The percentage of adults who have used the public library service in the last 12 months was noted as a Public Library Standard.
- 5.4 The Director of Library Services then informed the Committee that Queen's University Belfast (QUB) McClay Library was successful in a bid to secure £5,000 funding for a collaborative project between Libraries NI and the McClay Library at Queen's, focusing on key cultural heritage collections in Northern Ireland. She explained the aims and outcomes of the project that will bring together different professional communities (librarians, archivists, researchers) and encourage cross-institutional collaboration. The funding will allow the appointment of a part-time research assistant based at Queen's, as well as material for an exhibition at the end of the project in May 2025.
- 5.5 Ms A Adair also highlighted the successful Christmas family engagement activities that were delivered as part of ongoing work to develop a dedicated Children's Library and services at Whiterock Library in December 2024.
- 5.6 The Director of Library Services then invited the Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications to report on the digital advertising campaign. Mr G Beattie outlined the background to the funding, the procurement process and the focus of maximising the budget. It was noted that the campaign will run from the end of January to late February across outdoor sites (adshels), World Book Day, Radio and Social Media platforms as well as some press advertising and work with a key influencer. He outlined the target audience of four main groups and confirmed the locations of key digital adshels in strategic transport hubs and other outside sites across 20 towns and cities.

- 5.7 The Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications highlighted the aims of the advertising campaign as follows:
- to promote libraries to everyone in Northern Ireland as welcoming, inclusive spaces, serving as community hubs and offering services for all
 - to encourage new users to join and use Libraries NI's online services including eBooks, eAudiobooks, eNewspapers and eMagazines
 - to target key customer groups including parents and carers to encourage library use and reading amongst children.
- 5.8 In response to questions from Members, Mr G Beattie outlined the project targets, the use of QR codes and confirmed the key influencer. He also agreed to circulate the radio advertisement, welcomed the suggestion to use the radio advertisement on Libraries NI's podcast and said that he would investigate this.
- 5.9 Members commended the Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications on the impressive plan within the allocated budget.
- 5.10 Mr G Beattie then referred to the Making a Difference newsletter that was recently launched by the Marketing Team and was appended to the Director's Business report. The publication will be produced quarterly and it uses a combination of video, text and imagery to illustrate the work and services of libraries and the positive impact library use has on people's lives. The aim is to promote the publication in libraries and amongst stakeholders and, in turn, to build up a portfolio of publications that colleagues can then use when they meet with stakeholders at library events.
- 5.11 The Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications also clarified that Libraries NI would be contributing more stories to Libraries Change Lives and that he would work with CILIP to try to resolve the issue around geotagging.
- 5.12 The Director of Library Services then gave an update on capital developments. She informed the Services Committee of the recent reopening of Killyleagh and Fivemiletown libraries and it was noted that a formal reopening of Fivemiletown Library by Communities Minister Mr G Lyons would be held on 19 February at 12:30pm. She also informed Members of the small refurbishment project at Ballycastle Library.
- 5.13 Ms A Adair highlighted that £12,156.80 was raised from Macmillan coffee mornings in libraries in September 2024 bringing the total amount raised for Macmillan to date to £128,397.50. She commended Libraries NI's staff investment in making this such a successful fundraising event.
- 5.14 The Director of Library Services then drew Member's attention to the exhibitions in libraries during January and the following recent and forthcoming significant events and initiatives:
- Brew Monday, 20 January 2025
 - Laugh Your Way to Wellness, Laughter Workshops

- Burns Night, 25 January 2025
- Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January 2025
- Children’s Mental Health Week, 3 – 9 February 2025
- Give it a Go Week, 10 – 14 February 2025
- Safer Internet Day, 11 February 2025
- NI Science Festival, 12 – 23 February 2025
- Braille 200, Lisburn City Library, 25 February 2025
- World Book Day, 6 March 2025
- Seachtain na Gaeilge 1 - 17 March 2025
- Heritage Week, 10 – 14 March 2025.

5.15 The Director of Library Services also recapped on the following meetings recently attending by Services Directorate staff:

- Chief Executives' Forum, Transformative Leader Alumni Event, 22 November 2024
- launch of Tullycarnet Place Shaping Plan, 4 December 2024
- e-Licensing Project Board, 17 December 2024.

5.16 The Services Committee noted the total hours of ad hoc closures in libraries at the end of December 2024 that equates to 0.68% of the total available opening hours and noted that sickness absence continues to be the main contributor to ad hoc closures.

5.17 The Services Committee thanked the Director of Library Services and noted the Director’s Business report.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2024 SC.02.01.25

6.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Ms B Anley, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 21 November 2024 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 12 December 2024.

7. MATTERS ARISING

7.1 There were no matters arising.

8. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES COMMITTEE 2024/25 SC.03.01.25

8.1 The Chairperson introduced the Committee Effectiveness and Compliance Review papers that had been circulated including the Scheme of Delegation for Services Committee.

- 8.2 The Director of Library Services spoke to the Scheme of Delegation for Services Committee and confirmed that there were no proposed amendments to the existing Scheme.
- 8.3 Services Committee considered the scheme and on a proposal by Mr J Peto, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, the Services Committee agreed to recommend approval of the Scheme of Delegation to the Board.
- 8.4 The Chairperson then referred to the Committee Effectiveness Review. Committee Members considered the comments provided on the 2023/24 checklist and agreed these remain relevant with the following amendments:
- question 2 – add ‘Work is underway with DfC to develop a new Public Library Policy and work is also underway to develop a new five-year Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2025 – 2030’
 - question 2 – remove ‘Other departmental strategies to include Anti-poverty and Social Inclusion’
 - question 10 – add ‘Acknowledge the value of new membership’.
- 8.5 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Councillor A McAuley, the Services Committee approved the Committee Effectiveness Review.
- 8.6 The completed checklist appears at Appendix One.

9. REVIEW OF FILMING POLICY SC.04.01.25

- 9.1 Mr G Beattie, Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications, presented the review of the Filming Policy in line with the policy review cycle.
- 9.2 He explained the context of the changes in line with other Libraries NI policy reviews, the increased volume of filming requests received, to provide clarification around charging for filming in a library location, responsibility for liability against potential losses and responsibility for seeking permission for capturing photographs and recordings.
- 9.3 In response to questions, Mr G Beattie confirmed that photography and filming restrictions in libraries are covered under the Byelaws and that the Room Hire Policy takes account of any activity that may compromise the perception of libraries as a welcoming and inclusive space to all. He also confirmed that the Marketing Team seek comprehensive details on the content of any filming request received to inform their decision.
- 9.4 Mr A Driscoll highlighted the lack of impact on exterior library signage and the Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications recognised that this was key in certain locations but could not be addressed within the scope of the current budget.
- 9.5 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Mr A Driscoll, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Filming Policy to the Board.

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 be held on Thursday 20 March 2025 at 10:30am in Omagh Library.

12. MEMBERS' ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

12.1 The meeting ended at 12:11pm.

12.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

- Ms Kirsty McClelland, joined at 10:48am and left at 11:10am
- Louis Coiffait-Gunn, left at 11:10am
- Ms Brid Steele, left at 11:10am
- Ms Ciara Gault, left at 11:10am.

Board and Committee Effectiveness Review 2024/25

		Yes	No	Partly	Comments/Action Points
1.	Do we have a shared understanding of strategy and objectives and the challenges facing Libraries NI and are we clear about what we are trying to achieve?	√			
2.	Does our strategic direction align with the Programme for Government and Ministerial priorities?	√			The draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'. Department for Communities Strategy 'Building Inclusive Communities 2020 – 2025'. Work is underway with DfC to develop a new Public Library Policy and work is also underway to develop a new five-year Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2025 - 2030.
3.	How well do we understand the views of the public, service users, staff and other stakeholders?	√			Members value regular reports and presentations on this to continue to Services Committee.
4.	Is there open and regular communication between the Board and the Department and between officers and the Department?				N/A to Services Committee.
5.	Is our decision-making based on informed discussion and debate supported by appropriate documentation?	√			
6.	Do we exercise sufficient levels of challenge when considering key issues and information?	√			
7.	Do we receive information in a timely fashion?	√			

		Yes	No	Partly	Comments/Action Points
8.	Is the information we receive of good quality, appropriate and sufficient in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping us abreast of relevant developments both in Libraries NI and the broader library world? • setting key targets? • monitoring performance? • financial reporting and monitoring? • determining value for money? • gaining assurance? 	√			Members value opportunities to receive information about and presentations from other library organisations. The Director of Library Services to continue to engage speakers from other organisations.
9.	Are we confident that the risks facing the organisation have been effectively assessed and that appropriate plans are in place and being delivered to manage those risks?	√			The Services Risk Register is presented to Services Committee bi-annually and is aligned to the Corporate Risk Register
10.	Does the Board collectively have the right mix of skills and expertise, including an in-depth understanding and experience of public sector financial matters? Could the Board benefit from additional expertise provided by a co-opted member?	√			Acknowledge the value of new membership and that the Services Committee can co-opt if required.
11.	Are appropriate levels of delegation in place which makes clear when Board approvals are required?	√			
12.	Are Members' training needs being identified and addressed?	√			
13.	Is the organisation complying with the requirements to identify and manage conflicts of interest which may arise?	√			
14.	Are appropriate business cases/economic appraisals produced to justify expenditure? Are post-project evaluations completed as required?				N/A to Services Committee.
15.	Are there appropriate procurement, tendering and contract letting and management arrangements in place?				N/A to Services Committee.

		Yes	No	Partly	Comments/Action Points
16.	Are there appropriate arrangements in place to handle whistleblowing concerns?	√			
17.	Do we have the right Committees?				N/A to Services Committee. For Board consideration.
18.	Are the Committees operating effectively?	√			
19.	Does the Committee structure enhance our scrutiny work?	√			
20.	Is the Scheme of Delegation for each Committee, including the composition of the Committee appropriate?	√			
21.	Are there clear channels of communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between the Committees and the Board? • between the Board and stakeholders? • between the Board/Committees and officers? 	√			
22.	Is the frequency of Board and Committee meetings appropriate?	√			
23.	Are the dates, times and venues for Board/Committee meetings suitable?	√			Services Committee recognises the benefits for Board Members of seeing libraries first hand and will continue to circulate the venue for Services Committee meetings.
24.	Is the length of Board/Committee meetings sufficient to enable key strategic issues to be discussed and debated fully?	√			
25.	Are the minutes of Board and Committee meetings sufficiently detailed to record key decisions?	√			