

LIBRARIES NI

The Northern Ireland Library Authority

Minutes of a meeting of the Services Committee held remotely via Zoom
on Thursday 19 September 2024 at 10:30am

PRESENT

Mr John Peto	Chairperson
Councillor Julie Gilmour	
Councillor Andrew McAuley	
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Adrienne Adair	Director of Library Services
Ms Margaret Bell	Head of Service
Ms Julie Reid	Deputy Head of Service
Ms Diane McGlynn	Minutes

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Committee Members for accommodating the change of date.

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

1.1 An apology was received from Ms B Anley and Dr J O'Hagan.

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 Mr Sean Beattie resigned to take up a post in the McClay Library, Queens University Belfast and on behalf of the Services Committee thanked him for his contribution to Libraries NI and wished Mr Beattie well in his new role.

3.2 The Chairperson also referred to the conciliation agreement that had been reached with the Joint Trade Unions on the Branch Library Manager dispute with Action Short of Strike ceasing on 1 August 2024. Mr J Peto thanked the managers involved in reaching the agreement and noted that work is ongoing to reinstate library programming and activities.

4. DIRECTOR'S BUSINESS

SC.01.09.24

4.1 The Director of Library Services referred to the report that had been circulated and highlighted that all libraries returned to normal opening hours (late evenings) following the summer opening hours schedule.

4.2 Ms A Adair confirmed that core activities and programming was being reintroduced in libraries following the end to Action Short of Strike and also confirmed that statistics for participation in core activities would be recorded from 1 October 2024 providing a six-month baseline for the future.

4.3 The Director of Library Services drew attention to the visual presentation of ad hoc closures as requested by the Services Committee. She highlighted that for quarter one 2024/25 staff sickness was the main contributor to ad hoc closures and that the total hours of ad hoc closures equated to 0.59% of the total available opening hours.

4.4 Ms A Adair informed the Committee of recent visits to Enniskillen and Newtownards libraries by the Communities Minister and a planned visit to Carrickfergus Library on 20 September 2024. The Director of Library Services also reported that the Director of Culture, Iain Greenway and colleagues Louise Hyland and Fionnuala Elliott, had also visited a number of libraries recently with more visits scheduled in the Autumn. She advised Members that a comprehensive briefing is provided ahead of the visits, senior managers attend and that the opportunity to raise the profile of libraries is welcomed.

4.5 The Director of Library Services went on to give an update on plans for the official opening of Ballymoney Library on 2 October 2024 and the refurbished Bessbrook Library that reopened on 6 August with an official opening during Book Week NI to be confirmed. Ms A Adair also updated the Services Committee on progress on the refurbishment of Killyleagh Library.

4.6 The Director of Library Services drew attention to the image that was appended to the report displaying the vehicle livery that has been approved by The Executive Office promoting free period products in libraries. The plan is to use the vehicle for a series of roadshows and photo shoots in the autumn. She also highlighted that a customer survey is currently being carried out (2 – 28 September 2024) among Libraries NI's adult visitors (aged 16 and over) across a sample of 52 libraries. The survey will provide customers with an opportunity to

put forward their views and experiences on the provision of free period products in public libraries and the results will form part of the annual evaluation of the project which will be due in May 2024.

- 4.7 Ms A Adair also drew Members attention to The Big Bangor Read: A Reading City, a proposal that was appended to the Director's Business report which is part of the action plan of the new Reading and Reader Development Strategy that was recently presented to the Services Committee.
- 4.8 The Director of Library Services went on to highlight the Big Summer Read and informed Services Committee that a fuller evaluation report will be brought to the November meeting of the Services Committee.
- 4.9 Ms A Adair also drew Member's attention to a variety of significant events, such as:
- Windrush Ballet Performance, Lisburn City Library
 - Belfast Pride 2024
 - Tullycarnet Library 50th Anniversary
 - launch of Yarnspinnners new season
 - Macmillan coffee morning
 - BBC Comes to Town
 - Book Week NI.
- 4.10 The Services Committee discussed a number of items from the report and in response to a query the Director of Library Services confirmed that the Marketing Team continue to work on the visibility of events on social media platforms.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MAY 2024 SC.02.09.24

- 5.1 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the minutes of the Services Committee held on 16 May 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 27 June 2024.

6. MATTERS ARISING SC.03.09.24

- 6.1 Ms A Adair reminded Members of their request for a list of duties that were included in the Action Short of Strike (ASOS) and was therefore presenting the list albeit that a conciliation agreement had since been reached and ASOS ceased on 1 August 2024. Mrs W Osborne highlighted a potential need to reinvigorate morale and strengthen team spirit and the Director of Library

Services confirmed that line managers were engaging with library managers and that refresher training was being scheduled.

7. SERVICE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER 2024/25 SC.04.09.24

7.1 Ms M Bell, Head of Service, introduced the Service Plan for 2024/25 which identifies targets in line with the Business Plan which was presented to the Board in June 2024. She drew attention to a number of significant strands of work reflected in the plan including development of a CustomerFirst Strategy, a Children's Strategy and a framework for a digital service offer to facilitate digital choices. Ms M Bell also gave examples of programming to support strategic outcomes, specific events and national initiatives.

7.2 The Head of Service presented the risk register which details the risks identified in relation to the Services Directorate Services Plan for 2024/25. Ms M Bell gave an overview of each risk and the associated actions to mitigate the risk.

7.3 Mrs W Osborne enquired about the inclusion of the target to achieve £2.25 per capita on stock in line with the Public Library Standard and whether it was necessary to include a standard that was over ambitious considering the budget allocation which was beyond the control of Libraries NI. The Director of Library Services agreed to discuss the target with the Chief Executive and revert to Members with an update.

7.4 Subject to clarification on the target to achieve the Public Library Standard on stock spend, on a proposal by Councillor A McAuley, seconded by Councillor J Gilmour, the Services Committee agreed to approve the Service Plan and Risk Register 2024/25.

8. REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26 SC.05.09.24

8.1 Ms J Reid, Deputy Head of Service, presented the review of Fees and Charges for 2025/26. She explained the rationale for the fees and charges with no proposed changes to:

- computer use
- wi-fi use
- inter library loans
- black and white photocopying
- colour photocopying
- black and white IT printouts
- colour IT printouts.

- 8.2 The Deputy Head of Service then referred to the proposal to remove the charge for lost and damaged items for junior and teenage stock. She reported that whilst the charge is one method to encourage borrowers to return their loans the income received is minimal. Ms J Reid went on to explain that evidence confirms that some adults borrow books for their children on their card and the charge presents a barrier for customers to return to the library.
- 8.3 The Deputy Head of Service reported that the approach could be piloted for one year with monitoring and evaluation to ascertain if the removal of a perceived barrier to library use was reduced and/or removed and presented a potential opportunity to run a focus group with parents. Ms J Reid informed the Services Committee that pending Board approval, the proposal would also require Departmental approval.
- 8.4 On a proposal by Councillor J Gilmour, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Fees and Charges 2025/26 to the Board.

9. REVIEW OF OPENING HOURS POLICY SC.06.09.24

- 9.1 The Director of Library Services introduced the review of the Opening Hours Policy highlighting that the policy has been in operation since 2015 and being presented in line with the policy review cycle. Ms A Adair also highlighted that the last public consultation on library opening hours took place in 2015 and referred to minor amendments to the Opening Hours Policy in previous reviews.
- 9.2 Ms A Adair highlighted that the policy was reviewed in line with best practice and experience and that the proposed amendments clarify that the policy relates to static libraries, taking cognisance of the hybrid service offer enabling access to eResources outside static library opening hours.
- 9.3 The Director of Library Services confirmed that the proposed changes to the policy aim to broaden the scope of amending opening hours to react to specific circumstances and changes in local communities whilst ensuring a consistent, sustainable and inclusive approach.
- 9.4 On a proposal by Councillor A McAuley, seconded by Mrs W Osborne, the Services Committee agreed to recommend the approval of the Opening Hours 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 take place on Thursday 21 November 2024 at 10:30am in Lisburn Road Library.

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.