

**Nature of Meeting** National Library of Scotland Board Meeting  
**Venue** Microsoft Teams meeting  
**Date of Meeting** Wednesday 30 September 2020

**Present:** Simon Learoyd (Interim Chair — SL), Helen Durndell (Vice Chair — HD), Noreen Adams (NA), Elizabeth Carmichael (EC), Ruth Crawford QC (RC), Dianne Haley (DH), Alan Horn (AH), Iain Marley (IM), Lesley McPherson (LMcP), Adrienne Scullion (AS), Amina Shah (ASh), Melissa Terras (MT), Robert Wallen (RW)

**In attendance:** Mungo Bovey QC, Faculty of Advocates (MB), John Scally (National Librarian — JS), Anthony Gillespie (Director of Business Support — AG), Jackie Cromarty (Associate Director of External Relations — JCr), Jan Usher (TUS Representative — JU) and Kathy Hutton (Board Support and Compliance Officer — KH). Part-time: John Coll (JC); Lucy Clement (LC)

## Minutes of Meeting

### 1. Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting including Jan Usher returning as the trade union representative. The Chair advised Ruth Crawford QC has been reappointed for a further term and has agreed to join the Audit Committee. During opening remarks, the Chair highlighted:

- He has completed a very useful Induction programme which included conversations with a cross-section of staff members and attendance at Board sub-committee meetings.
- The Staffing & Remuneration Committee will discuss the Library's operating model and its wider impacts for home working at their next meeting, with a paper to come to the next Board meeting on the impacts of Covid on Library colleagues' working.
- The direction of travel of public engagement through digital content, online events and social media has accelerated in the last 6 months and is expected to continue to grow.
- The Chair's induction with Library staff showed that they have confidence in the National Librarian and the leadership team to manage through the pandemic and deliver a safe working environment.
- The Library is committed to step up to the challenge of youth employment and early career employment by seeking to grow opportunities for placements and internships.
- The 'day to day' work of the Library has continued through the pandemic and this is reflected in the Librarian's report.

- Recent discussions with the Scottish Government (SG) covered the broader financial and economic outlook as the wider impacts of Covid on the economy become clearer.
- The scheduled Board 'away day' meeting in February 2021 will not take place. Potential rescheduling for the latter half of 2021 will await consideration by the new Board Chair.

## **2. Apologies for Absence**

None.

## **3. Declarations of Interests**

The Chair requested any declarations be made at the appropriate time in the agenda. RC asked for her position as Treasurer of the Faculty of Advocates to be noted in relation to the Annual Report & Financial Statements paper as the Faculty of Advocates is a related party of the Library.

## **4. Horizon scanning**

The Board noted Brexit, Covid-19, Black Lives Matter and SG Culture Strategy remain ongoing issues that may impact future Library activities.

## **5. Minutes of the meeting of 24 June 2020**

The Board approved the minutes (BM/20/34) and confidential minute (BM/20/35).

## **6. Actions outstanding and matters arising from previous meetings**

The Board noted the action status.

## **7. Audit Committee minutes**

The Board noted the minutes of 10 August 2020 (BM/20/37).

## **8. Governance Committee minutes**

The Board noted the minutes of 8 September 2020 (BM/20/38).

## **9. NLS Foundation Minutes**

The Board noted the minutes of 8 August 2020 (BM/20/39). The Chair advised the Foundation would shortly be recruiting for a new Chair and a number of trustees.

## **10. National Librarian's Report**

JS introduced paper BM/20/40 highlighting:

- The 2020-2025 strategy launch had taken place virtually with patrons and donors and separately with a number of journalists. The launch has been covered in a number of newspapers and during the coming months, various aspects will be highlighted via the appropriate channel.
- The Library has been seeking to expand its involvement in youth employability (YE) throughout the lockdown period in anticipation of the economic pressures to come and its expected effect on young people. JS confirmed a report would next come to the Staffing & Remuneration Committee.
- Further examples of the 'Library in Lockdown' which highlighted the continued good work undertaken by staff during the pandemic. This included 'Collection Discovery' which lets staff curate and highlight specific Library items and present them as a collection to our users in a more visual and appealing way.
- The work of staff in resuming Library services to the public since August.

The Chair thanked JS and Library staff for another interesting report highlighting some of the good work of Library staff. During discussion, it was noted that the S&R Committee will receive information to consider how internships and YE might fit with the Library's own talent pipeline over the next five years. The Committee will also consider opportunities to encourage a more diverse pool of intern applicants.

## **11 Library Plan Update – 2020/21 – Q1**

JS introduced paper BM/20/41 advising that the Board agreed the 2020/21 Library Plan at its meeting on 25 March 2020.

The majority of objectives (53%) have been assessed as 'Green' which means that they remain on track for the year. Only five targets (8%) have been assessed as 'Red' which means they are now not going to be achieved in the year. Given the length of the lockdown the Library had initially expected this figure to be higher. As is to be expected, a higher than normal number of objectives are ranked as 'Amber' which means that they are behind schedule.

During discussion, the Board noted that continued staff engagement was critical at this time. JS advised a short staff survey had been carried out during lockdown and is now working to develop its own annual staff survey as the Library no longer has access to the Civil Service engagement survey process. This year another short staff survey (or pulse check) was being

considered. JS also confirmed that a 'Task and Finish' group including Trade Union involvement is developing a working from home policy whilst the Library continues to look for opportunities for continued staff engagement.

The Board noted the report. Following discussion, the Board agreed to maintain reporting against the existing measures in the Library Plan and asked that ways to highlight achievements during this time be reviewed. JS confirmed the leadership team would look at the best way to report on the additional effort and achievements of staff outwith the original KPIs.

## **12 Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019/2020**

IM advised that Audit Scotland plans to issue an unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements to March 2020. The key messages within the Audit Scotland report are all positive. The Audit Committee had concluded it was a good outcome and recognised AG and the finance team for the quality of work to complete the audit.

Four recommendations had been made by Audit Scotland relating to cyber security risk, procurement training for staff, budget forecast revision and Title Deeds. There was one emphasis of matter on land and building valuations given the uncertainties caused by Covid-19 on land and building valuations. However, this is an issue affecting many other organisations during this time.

IM advised that in relation to the cyber essentials recommendation, it is understood that Stuart Lewis (SLe) is planning a 'mock accreditation' exercise to test the Library's preparedness for Cyber Essentials Plus (CEP) accreditation. The Board agreed it was important to understand any areas of risk identified in advance of applying for CEP accreditation. JS confirmed that he and the leadership team fully supported SLe's approach and that a report was planned for both the November Audit Committee and Board.

AG advised the Audit Committee had reviewed the reserves policy and it was of the opinion that the policy should be changed from general reserves being a minimum of 3 months charitable or trading income to 3 months of all income excluding Grant in Aid. The Board approved the change in policy.

The Board noted the Annual Audit Report from Audit Scotland and approved signing of the Letter of Representation and Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2019/20 by the Chair.

John Coll (JC) joined the meeting.

### **13. Re-opening of Reading Rooms in Edinburgh**

JS introduced paper BM/20/43 advising that the Library is sensitive to changes in SG advice in respect of the operations of the Library as they arise.

JC advised that a major exercise had been undertaken by staff in order to bring both readers and staff back safely into the Library buildings. The focus is on a public offering to give limited access to the collections but other public areas would remain closed. Usage by readers over the last seven weeks is around 74%-79% of available space.

JC confirmed contingency plans and communications are in place in the event of requiring to lockdown the buildings again, even if required within a 24 hour period. Contingency plans are in place in the event of a reader or staff member testing positive for Covid. All materials are subject to a 72 hour quarantine period.

The Chair thanked JC and the Library staff for the considerable and well executed work to bring the Library buildings back into use after lockdown.

The Board noted the report and asked for an update report to be provided for the March 2021 Board meeting.

John Coll left the meeting. Lucy Clement (LC) joined the meeting.

### **14. Fundraising plan update**

JCr introduced paper BM/20/44, advising that the Library is staying in touch with donors and had done so during the lockdown period.

LC provided an overview of the paper, advising that existing supporters receive regular communication. Supporters had appreciated the increased digital engagement which had also allowed expansion of engagement with certain groups, such as with the American Patrons.

The Board noted that Covid had curtailed fundraising plans with a 58% decrease in income. It was noted this was not unique to the Library as generally many donors are directing funds to more health related areas.

LC advised an external consultant had been engaged to review future fundraising plans, especially around the GB Re-imagined project.

The Board thanked LC for the update and work undertaken by the fundraising team during lockdown. The Board acknowledged that during this time, one of the main priorities was for the Library to maintain relationships with supporters.

Lucy Clement left the meeting.

## **15. Quarter 1 Finance Report 2020/21**

AG provided a brief overview of paper BM/20/45 advising that budget reviews are now undertaken more regularly (every month). The Board noted the Library's financial performance in Q1 is positive to forecast reflecting lower discretionary spending during lockdown. AG advised the Library is currently expected to generate a small surplus at year end.

AG advised the capital value of the investment portfolio had recovered to June 2019 levels following a time of volatility experienced across the markets. IM advised the Audit Committee will receive an update at its November meeting from the Library's two investment managers and may recommend bringing the investment risk profile to the Board for consideration following this.

The Board noted that extra funding had been received from the Scottish Government for collection protection work and would mainly be used for work at Causwayside including additional barriers to contain fire within book stacks. It was also noted that additional funds had been received for environmental sustainability.

The Board noted the report.

## **16. Health & Safety report**

JCr provide an overview of paper BM/20/46.

- No incidents had been reported since the last report to the Board.
- The Health & Safety Manager has been heavily involved in providing advice in re-opening the Library buildings but also in providing input to the Task and Finish group as they formulate a working from home policy.

The Board agreed that staff wellbeing is a priority for both the Board and the Library's leadership team. JS acknowledged the continued important work of managers and staff as well as the trade union representatives who have provided valuable input.

The Board noted the report.

## **17. Board Governance External Evaluation Review**

ASh advised the Governance Committee are taking forward the periodic review of Board effectiveness. This will include examples of best practice which the Board may benefit from implementing. The final report is due to be presented to the Board in March

2021. ASh thanked the Board members in advance for the time commitment involved through either interviews or completing questionnaires as suggested by the external consultant.

JCr confirmed that the review was intended to engage with a variety of stakeholders in addition to Board members, such as the Librarian and Library's leadership team.

The Board noted the report and look forward to receiving any recommendations at the March 2021 Board.

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 25 November 2020

The Chair advised the next meeting was expected to last three hours: two for Board business and one for the presentation from the George IV Bridge Re-imagined design team.