

Nature of Meeting National Library of Scotland Board Meeting
Venue Teleconference
Date of Meeting Wednesday 25 March 2020

Present: Kenneth Calman (Chair - KC), Helen Durndell (Vice Chair – HD), Simon Learoyd (Vice Chair – SL), 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), Susanne Munro (TUS Representative - SM) and Kathy Hutton (Board Support and Compliance Officer - KH - minutes)

1. Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Noreen Adams.

3. Declarations of Interests

The Chair requested any declarations be made at the appropriate time in the agenda.

4. Agenda

The Chair requested all items in the formal agenda, except those undernoted, be taken as read or approved. There being no comments, all such items were taken as read with the major loan request (item 13) and Committees' Terms of Reference (item 15) approved. The meeting moved to discuss:

Coronavirus update;
Library plan and budget 2020-21;
Draft strategy 2020-2025;
Quarter 3 finance report 2019-20

5. Coronavirus update

JS advised the Library had followed a response plan activated by the Library's Disaster Response and Recover Group. This resulted in a structured and professional 'managing down' of the Library so that only staff essential to ensure security of the closed Library

buildings were now on site, with the remaining staff now homeworking. This was completed over a period of four days, Tues-Fri 17-20 March. JS commended all in the Library for their efforts in achieving this in such a short timescale.

JS further advised that volunteers had come forward to bolster the critical security staff and the Disaster Response & Collections Recovery Group as and when required. Other critical staff such as Estates, HR and Finance would come onsite only when essential tasks that could not be done offsite needed done.

JS highlighted that annual emergency response training and a large-scale emergency simulation exercise had taken place at Causewayside in November, both had assisted in implementing the 'managing down' process in the tight timescale (see p.48 of the National Librarian's Report to the Board for information of the two events).

KC thanked JS for the regular updates to Board members over the previous week and the Board noted they would continue to be apprised on a regular basis. The Board commended the efforts of all staff to date.

JCr advised the Library's 'media team' are working on initiatives to promote the Library's digital collections as well as reviewing what educational facilities may be made available online while the Library buildings are closed.

6. Library plan and budget 2020-21

JS advised the proposed Library plan and budget was put forward for approval but asked the Board to note the Coronavirus situation would inevitably impact both. JS stated that Audit Committee had already discussed in detail the Library Plan and Budget and had recommended it to the Board.

AG confirmed a good financial settlement had been advised by the Scottish Government (SG) with the same capital funding as in previous years. The budget presented is based on implementing the SG Pay Policy in full. The budget planning takes account of use of a small amount of reserves, however it is still a prudent budget.

AG also advised that, bearing in mind the Coronavirus situation, the Library will require to undertake a re-budgeting exercise later in the year. At present, it is also anticipated that it could be difficult to spend the full capital amount in 2020/21 and the Library will seek to engage with the SG on this.

SL confirmed the Audit Committee recommended that the Board approve the plan and budget for 2020-21 but note these would very likely require revision in approximately 6 months. The Committee also asked the Board to note potential risks such as decreased revenue and that any SG finance review might affect

the collection protection funding request to be submitted.

7. Draft strategy 2020-25

JS advised the draft strategy has been revised following comprehensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including deep discussion at the recent Board Away Day. Staff have also been very engaged with the drafting process and will continue to play a role in the period prior the June Board meeting.

The Library Leadership Team will continue to review the draft strategy with a final version brought to the June Board meeting. JS confirmed the 'Improving Access' section would be revisited to take account of the comments made at this meeting.

KC commended the considerable amount of work undertaken to date to take account of responses and bring a draft to the Board. The Board noted this is expected to come back to the Board in June for approval.

8. Quarter 3 finance report 2019-20

AG advised that, in relation to the financial position up to the end of December 2019, there has been a generally good performance.

With the Coronavirus situation, there are some financial downsides such as a loss in income with the recent shop closure. The most immediately noticeable downside is the reduction in the value of investment funds by approximately 15% to date. The Library will need to show this in its Income & Expenditure Account for the year. It is shown as an accounting adjustment however, a positive adjustment following revaluation of the Library's land and buildings will offset this.

There have also been some positive financial upsides such as a reduction in travel costs. Taking account of all financial impacts from the Coronavirus, at present we are still likely to underspend for the 2019/20 year.

AG asked the Board to note it will be challenging to pull together a set of financial statements for this year however, the Library has already opened up discussion with our auditors on how to progress this.

SL advised that, during consideration of the investment policy risk appetite last year, the Audit Committee noted that the Library's investment horizon was 5 years and performance would be viewed over this longer term. SL further advised that the NLS Foundation had also seen a decrease in investment funds, similar to many other organisations as a result of the Coronavirus' impact on financial markets.

9. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 24 June 2020

The Board noted it may be necessary to hold the next Board meeting by teleconference due to the continuing Coronavirus situation. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 15.00