

Annual Business Plan 2023/24



Contents

Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive	ii
1. Who we are.....	4
1.3 Our Vision	4
1.4 Our Mission	4
1.5 Our Values	4
1.6 Our Network and Services	5
1.7 Our Staff Customer Promise	6
2. The Planning Context	7
3. Outcome Areas and Strategic Actions	8
4. 2023/24 Strategic Actions, Annual Targets and Objectives	9
5. Measuring Results	16
6. Financing Our Services	19
7. Governance and Delivering the Business Plan.....	20
Appendix 1: Libraries NI Board Members.....	22
Appendix 2: Libraries NI - Organisation Structure	23

Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive



We are pleased to present the Annual Business Plan 2023/24 which sets out the direction of travel for Libraries NI for the next twelve months and outlines our ambitions for delivering the public library service in Northern Ireland. The Annual Business Plan is set very much within the overarching framework of our Corporate Plan which sets out the Outcome Areas and Strategic Actions for the period 2020 – 24. Both the Business and Corporate Plans are closely linked and aligned to wider government priorities, and in particular the Department for Communities Business Plans and Strategy 2020-25: Building Inclusive Communities and the aim of making a lasting and sustainable contribution to improving the societal wellbeing of individuals and communities in Northern Ireland.

This plan has been developed in a continuing climate of financial, societal and economic uncertainty. During 2022/23 we recovered from the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, we adjusted to new ways of working and library activities and services returned to a more normal footing. We were then confronted with a new challenge as global events and uncertainty took a turn for the worse and sent prices and inflation soaring, creating a real and deep cost of living crisis and this is set to persist well into 2023/24. It is at times of crisis like this that the work we do in libraries is more important than ever and makes a difference to the lives of people in our local communities. Without detracting from the importance of providing a comprehensive library service and a wide range of free events, activities and resources libraries are also safe and welcoming inclusive spaces and places.

The constrained outlook for public finances will make 2023/24 one of the most challenging business years with funding for the public library service having been reduced by 5%, during a period of exceptional inflationary cost increases, creating significant pressure to be managed and in effect no funding for book stock. Consequently, there will be a significant focus throughout the year on managing within a much reduced level of funding and this will adversely impact on the services we are able to provide. In particular, not being able to purchase book stock and cutting services to cope with inflationary costs will have significant repercussions for the delivery of a

comprehensive and efficient library service. We will work hard to ensure that libraries continue to deliver on priority agendas that make a real difference to the lives of individuals and communities. However, the constrained financial situation will inevitably impact on the scope of what can be delivered.

The extensive network of libraries remains strategically important and we believe that this importance will strengthen as we continue to work collaboratively with organisations across government departments, public bodies and the voluntary and private sectors. Despite the challenges Libraries NI must continue to play its part in wider society, supporting the delivery of services, providing local access points and helping customers to connect with information and services that contribute to social and economic wellbeing. All of this is only made possible by our dedicated and professional staff who are committed to delivering high standards of service and providing help and support to assist people using libraries, no matter what their background or circumstances.

Libraries are trusted service providers in the heart of communities supporting people from different backgrounds and demographics, encouraging a love of reading and providing opportunities for people to learn and to connect with information, technology and services. As we work to meet the many challenges of the next twelve months, we will continue to play our part in societal and economic recovery, working closely with officials from the Department for Communities, other government departments and partners, to deliver for people whilst building upon our unique position as a trusted and valued community resource.

In these uncertain times this business plan will need to remain agile and adaptable as we respond to challenges and changing priorities. We are certain that by working together we can ensure that high quality public library services continue to be delivered to support local communities and wider society in Northern Ireland.



Bernard Cullen
Chairperson



Jim O'Hagan
Chief Executive

1. Who we are

1.1 The Northern Ireland Library Authority, more commonly known as Libraries NI, is a regional body responsible for the provision and delivery of a public library service in Northern Ireland. Libraries NI is the largest single library authority in the UK. Our primary duty, as set down in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.

1.2 The Board of Libraries NI, when fully constituted, comprises a Chairperson and 18 Members, the majority of whom are councillors within the meaning of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Board Members are appointed by the Department for Communities.

1.3 Our Vision

A visible, accessible and inclusive library service at the heart of communities, enhancing lives and valued by all.

1.4 Our Mission

Connecting people with information, ideas and experiences to foster lifelong learning, inspire curiosity, provide enjoyment and strengthen communities.

1.5 Our Values

Caring - we care about our library users, the community, each other and what we do. We will provide a safe and welcoming environment where people can connect and explore. We will show respect for users of our service and for each other, will build trust and will strive to provide positive experiences for both external and internal customers.

Accountable – we take responsibility, as individuals and as an organisation, for effective stewardship of the resources allocated to us and for delivering on our commitments. We will act with honesty and integrity and maintain high standards of governance, responsible leadership and efficient operations.

Responsive – we are a learning organisation that is open to new ideas and better ways to serve individuals and communities. We have a focus on quality, are creative and flexible and will continue to explore innovative ways of working to ensure that services are vibrant, effective and relevant to the changing needs of our customers.

1.6 Our Network and Services

The library network is crucial to the delivery of both an effective and comprehensive library service taking account of the geographic and demographic spread of Northern Ireland. Our services are delivered through a network of 96 branch libraries, heritage libraries, mobile libraries and a homecall service, which provide a wide range of free services including:

- books and other material such as audio books, newspapers, periodicals and magazines
- downloadable eBooks, audio books, eNewspapers and eMagazines and other online resources, most of which can also be accessed from home
- supported access to computers for use by the general public with free internet access for library members
- support for the development of ICT skills
- free Wi-Fi, enabling library members to use their own devices
- learning opportunities
- storytimes, rhythm and rhyme sessions and other activities for children
- school class visits
- family history, heritage and local studies material
- access to information from a range of sources and organisations
- access to cultural and creative experiences, including art and music
- reading groups for children, teenagers and adults
- health and wellbeing information, activities and events
- social activities, such as 'Knit and Natter' and 'Tea and Newspapers', which promote community cohesion and combat isolation
- study, meeting and shared social space.

During 2022/23 there was a focus on renewing, refocusing and re-energising library services as we sought to normalise operations while continuing to be COVID aware, taking account of government and public health advice and guidance. The year was also characterised by financial, societal and economic uncertainty where global events created a cost of living crisis which has had widespread impacts and implications for people and organisations as prices, costs and inflation soared. The absence of a functioning Executive and delays in setting a budget until late in the year added to the challenges faced in 2022/23.

Through the efforts of our staff the library service responded at this time of need by adapting service offerings, raising awareness of the range of free services available in local libraries and signposting to wider information and assistance available through partnership organisations. As we face into 2023/24 continuing to maintain services and service delivery will be both challenging and vitally important for our customers and the many hard pressed communities we serve.

1.7 Our Staff Customer Promise

We value the many and different people who come to libraries to use the services we offer. Libraries are all about people and we have developed a Staff Customer Promise setting out, under five themes, our approach and intentions when engaging with the many and varied library customers. This is summarised below.



2. The Planning Context

- 2.1 In developing the Annual Business Plan 2023/24 consideration has been given to a range of external factors that influence, shape and impact on libraries, library use and the public sector landscape within which the library service is delivered. These factors include public policy, economic, social, cultural, technological developments, library customers and our staff. We recognise that we do not operate in isolation and take account of the wider economic and societal challenges and government priorities as well as strategic developments taking place in respect of library service provision and wider public service provision generally.
- 2.2 The most significant external factors over the past two years have been the impact of the coronavirus pandemic followed by the cost of living crisis, both of which have caused unprecedented disruption to peoples' lives, society and public services, including library services. Despite the extraordinary challenges, as a result of the dedication, commitment and contribution of staff across the whole organisation, Libraries NI was able to recover substantively from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, respond to the cost of living crisis and make good progress delivering against last year's business plan.
- 2.3 As we move into 2023/24 we are under no illusion about the scale of the challenge that lies ahead. The cost of living crisis is set to continue while the economic outlook for next year remains pessimistic and public finances are set to be severely constrained. Undoubtedly there will be substantial financial challenges ahead for libraries NI and we will work closely with officials from the Department for Communities to secure adequate levels of investment to maintain and develop services and to meet our statutory obligation to deliver a comprehensive and efficient public library service. However, we need to be clear about the connection between the level of funding allocated to support the library service and our ability to deliver against this plan.
- 2.4 During 2022/23 the managed service arrangements to support our information and communications technology infrastructure were renewed. This involved updating applications and hardware and an upgrade to our IT network infrastructure which will provide greater bandwidth and faster broadband speeds, improved Wi-Fi and better service reliability and resilience to all 98 libraries across Northern Ireland. Over the course of 2023/24 our customers, our partner organisations and internal services and business support departments and functions will begin to see the positive benefits and opportunities of this investment in technology.
- 2.5 We also recognise that our staff are central to the delivery of this business plan and more importantly to the future delivery of the public library service. Despite all the changes that have taken place, our staff have continued to provide high quality service and the feedback received from library customers consistently tells us that they value highly the knowledge, skills and support provided by our staff across the library network. We will continue to implement the new organisation structures and engage with our staff and provide them with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can continue to deliver high quality, professional and customer focused services.

- 2.6 The Annual Business Plan is set within the context of our Corporate Plan which sets out the Outcome Areas and Strategic Actions for the period 2020 – 24 and which can be accessed [Here](#). Our priorities and outcomes are also guided by the vision and priorities of the Department for Communities and the wider framework of societal outcomes articulated in the previous Programme for Government (PfG) and NICS Outcomes Delivery Plans as well as being informed by themes emerging from Community Plans and a range of other government strategies and policies including the Children and Young People’s Strategy, the Skills for a 10 x Economy Strategy, the Rural Policy Framework and Digital Transformation.
- 2.7 The Department for Communities Strategy 2020-25: Building Inclusive Communities provides another important point of reference for libraries to contribute to the aim of making a lasting and sustainable contribution to improving the societal wellbeing of individuals and communities in Northern Ireland. As we look to the future we are also mindful of work the Department is taking forward in respect of new social inclusion strategies and work that is being brought forward on the development of a Culture Arts and Heritage strategy. We also look forward to working with the Department during 2023/24 to further consider the development and updating of the overarching public library strategy that will be important to setting the future framework for the delivery of library services.

3. Outcome Areas and Strategic Actions

- 3.1 This Annual Business Plan has been developed taking account of outcomes based principles and approaches. An outcomes-based approach represents a fundamental change to the way in which Libraries NI plans and delivers a public library service in Northern Ireland. The PfG framework sets out the major societal outcomes of the Northern Ireland Executive and provides the strategic direction for the delivery of public services in Northern Ireland. At a population level 12 priority outcomes have been set and all Departments and public bodies are required to work collaboratively to deliver against them and to contribute towards the overarching aim of 'improving wellbeing for all – by tackling disadvantage and driving growth'.
- 3.2 In developing the Annual Business Plan we have taken account of our statutory responsibility to deliver a public library service and have sought to closely align what we do with those parts of the previously agreed PfG framework and the Department for Communities strategic priorities that have most relevance and where we believe our impact to be most significant. The plan also draws on themes and outcomes articulated in community plans developed under the auspices of the 11 district councils in Northern Ireland.
- 3.3 We have identified three Libraries NI outcome areas and have developed a number of strategic actions around each of the outcome areas. The Libraries NI outcome areas and strategic actions provide the context and framework for 'delivery' of priorities and services with more detailed annual objectives and

targets being set to ensure the aspirations and ambitions articulated in the four-year Corporate Plan are delivered.

4. 2023/24 Strategic Actions, Annual Targets and Objectives

- 4.1 The following section sets out, in detail, the Libraries NI Outcome Areas, Strategic Actions and annual targets and objectives.
- 4.2 The impact of the cost of living crisis and the economic and financial challenges experienced during 2022/23 are likely to extend into the 2023/24 business planning year and consequently work to deliver many of the targets included in this plan will be affected by the level of funding allocated and the scale of cuts or other measures that are required to be applied.
- 4.3 Due to the continued level of geo-political and economic uncertainty as we move into the 2023/24 year it will be necessary to adopt a flexible approach and to keep the Business Plan under review in-year and this may result in the plan being adjusted and or updated to reflect any material changes that are taking place within the operational landscape.

4.3 Annual Business Plan 2023/24

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
Outcome 1: A shared, inclusive public library service supporting communities and societal well-being				
1	Provide a customer focused public library service to people living, working or studying in Northern Ireland which contributes to societal wellbeing	1.1	Work with the Department for Communities to develop a new draft Public Library Strategy by 31 March 2024	DLS
		1.2	Develop a strategy as a basis for the development and delivery of new approaches to inclusive Services and Models of Service Delivery by 31 March 2024	DLS
		1.3	In line with the Public Library Standard Stock spend £2.25 per capita on stock – PLS target.	DLS
		1.4	Implement actions, as appropriate, in response to the findings of the 2022 triennial Customer Survey by March 2024.	DLS
		1.5	Implement the Collections Development Policy by March 2024	DLS
		1.6	Develop and implement strategies to expand the customer base, increase library membership and maximise participation to achieve or exceed the following targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,000,000 loans and renewals¹ • 1,000,000 e loans¹ • 240,000 active members • 50,000 new members 	DLS

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
		1.7	Proactively promote libraries as welcoming spaces in which to enjoy a range of services and programmes that help to address the social impact of the cost of living crisis and contribute to individual wellbeing, positive mental health and reducing social isolation and loneliness.	DLS
		1.8	Contribute to good relations through a range of initiatives.	DLS
2	Create strong mutually beneficial regional and local partnerships, including with other public services and community planning partners, to develop libraries as access points for a wide range of services.	2.1	Engage with strategic and/or relevant partnerships to enhance Libraries NI visibility as access points to deliver services, widen access and increase participation.	DLS
		2.2	Continue to contribute to the delivery of Community Planning.	DLS
3	Reduce barriers to library use especially for those at risk of being socially excluded.	3.1	Identify two new at risk customer groups and develop actions to encourage them to access and use libraries and services by March 2024.	DLS
4	Raise awareness and increase understanding of library services with customers, the general public and stakeholders.	4.1	Commence implementation of the 2023/24 Stakeholder Plan in May 2023 and ensure the Plan is actioned, monitored and updated continuously until 31 March 2024.	DLS
		4.2	Raise awareness of Libraries NI, its unique position as a single library authority, and achievements to the local, national and international professional library world.	DLS
		4.3	Investigate using new social media channels and develop a plan to establish Libraries NI presence.	DLS

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
		4.4	Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to devise/develop a targeted, customer focused, strategy to promote the benefits of library membership, resources and Service Offers by 31 March 2024.	DLS
Outcome 2: Inspired, informed and literate children and adults.				
5	Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults.	5.1	In line with the 2023 – 2026 Reader Development Strategy for all customers, deliver the 2023-24 Reader Development Action Plan by 31 March 2024.	DLS
		5.2	Promote, deliver and evaluate the 2023 Big Summer Read, through a programme of outreach, events and activities to reach a minimum of 20,000 children.	DLS
		5.3	Deliver a range of supported programming and events to enhance lifelong long learning opportunities for all.	DLS
6	Provide access to Heritage resources and services to the widest possible audience.	6.1	Develop and deliver innovative services and programming to increase access to, and participation in, Cultural Heritage for all age groups.	DLS
7	Improve digital services, access and literacy.	7.1	Provide comprehensive access to ICT, including computer resources, including Wi-Fi, PATs and internet access across the library network.	DBS
		7.2	Promote use of computer resources (Wi-Fi and PATs) across the library network (Targets: Wi-Fi 75,000 sessions, PATS 225,000)	DLS
		7.3	Provide access to a range of services and programmes which promote digital literacy.	DLS

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
		7.4	Deliver a mix of learning opportunities and other programming to widen access to and increase Digital understanding and skills. (Target 500).	DLS
8	Promote access to information, information literacy and support children and adults to become more informed citizens.	8.1	Develop and deliver services, resources and programmes to promote both access to information and signposting communities to relevant information sources, including positive health and wellbeing, the environment, sustainability, cost of living and online safety and information literacy.	DLS
Outcome 3: Effective governance and delivery				
9	Maintain an effective organisational and governance framework and support and develop our people to enable delivery of high quality public services.	9.1	Reduce overall sickness absence levels (FTE days lost) to 11.50 days, or less (from the baseline figure of 13.90 days as at 31 March 2023).	DBS
		9.2	Engage with staff to bolster morale and strengthen the organisational culture, taking account of the climate of financial, societal and economic uncertainty and current industrial action.	SMT
		9.3	Implement and embed revised structures for service delivery and determine, as appropriate, any further changes needed by 31 March 2024.	DLS
		9.4	Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 submitted for audit by 12 July 2023 and certified by NIAO by 31 October 2023.	DBS
		9.5	Update, as appropriate, processes and procedures to reflect new governance arrangements following completion and sign-off of the new Partnership Agreement (by 31 October 2023).	DBS

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
		9.6	Provide an Internal Audit Service to support effective governance and delivery of organisational objectives, including completion of 90% of planned audits by 31 March 2024.	HIA
10	Make best use of available resources to support identified priorities and deliver an effective and valued public library service.	10.1	Deliver annual resource and capital expenditure within 1% underspend of respective total budgets by 31 March 2024.	DBS
		10.2	Develop and deploy financial control measures to address pressures arising from reductions in resource funding allocation.	DBS
		10.3	Implement key deliverables of the e3 project to include new Library Management, Self Service, Finance, HR and Payroll systems by 31 March 2024.	HICU
		10.4	Progress the Belfast Central Library Project and specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure resources to support the completion of an updated Outline Business Case (OBC) by 31 August 2023. 2. Deliver an updated project OBC for Departmental consideration by 31 January 2024. 	DBS
		10.5	Review the Corporate Risk Register quarterly at Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board, and review Service and Project Risk Registers bi-annually at relevant Committees.	CE
		10.6	Implement major and minor capital works and maintenance programmes in line with available resources by 31 March 2024.	DBS / CE
		10.7	Incorporate positive actions to mitigate climate change impacts in major and minor capital works and maintenance programmes by 31 March 2024.	DBS

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
		10.8	Develop a plan, by 31 December 2023, setting out the actions and resources needed to meet 2030 climate change milestone targets.	DBS
		10.9	Building on the functionality of e3 HR system upgrade, implement proposal to improve staff performance appraisal processes by September 2023.	DBS
11	Implement an OBA approach to business planning and performance measurement.	11.1	Produce, by 31 March 2024, a high-level scorecard for business plan outcomes considering targets, objectives and baseline information requirements, reporting against the OBA parameters of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much did we do • How well did we do it, and • Is anyone better off? 	SMT

5. Measuring Results

5.1 Effective planning, performance management and reporting are vital in ensuring that the needs of service users are met, essential services are delivered and statutory obligations discharged and that the organisation continues to improve and be open and transparent about progress and risks. The move to an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) approach to planning and delivery requires a different approach to performance management, measurement and monitoring. An important element of any outcomes based approach is the shift in emphasis to outcomes and measuring the impact of actions or interventions as opposed to simply measuring the amount of work that is delivered. Two distinct levels of reporting and monitoring are typically associated with OBA:

- (1) Monitoring outcomes at a population level, which is done by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) using a range of indicators to reflect collective progress of departments and public bodies. This monitoring reflects change at a population level with no one department, Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) or other organisation likely to affect outcomes in isolation
- (2) Monitoring actions through performance accountability measures which are concerned with the impact of individual actions delivered by ALB's.

5.2 Strategic Actions related to the outcome areas identified in this plan will be monitored and their impact measured at the organisation level. Nevertheless, by working to realise actions in outcome areas Libraries NI will be able to make its contribution towards achievement of population outcomes such as health, education, children and young people, societal wellbeing, digital inclusion, connecting people and strengthening communities.

5.3 The OBA approach will be incorporated into the existing performance management framework in Libraries NI which consists of different elements including:

- the Corporate Plan which sets out the high level outcomes and strategic actions linked to the PfG and DfC strategies for library services
- an annual Business Plan which sets out the actions we need to take and the targets that we need to achieve in year
- Key Performance Indicators, which are used to report regularly at Board level and to DfC on progress in relation to the Annual Business Plan
- Service Plans which translate the Business Plan into more detailed actions and targets to be taken forward by various teams within the organisation
- the Staff Appraisal process which includes the setting of personalised targets and goals for individual members of staff to enable them to fulfil their respective roles in meeting the actions and targets set out in the Service Plans
- the Risk Management and associated assurance processes which are embedded in the routines and activities of the organisation and provide a structured and coherent approach to identifying, assessing and managing the risk to achievement of objectives and

- the Annual Report and Accounts which provide detailed information on our work during the year.
- 5.4 The most significant risks to the achievement of outcomes and strategic actions is the economic and geo-political uncertainty, unmanageable cost increases driven by global and inflationary forces and securing an appropriate level of funding to deliver the public library service.
- 5.5 The Outcome Areas, Strategic Actions and Key Performance Indicators for the 2023/24 Business Plan are set out below.

Table 1: Outcome Areas, Strategic Actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Outcome Area: A shared, inclusive public library service supporting communities and societal wellbeing	
<p>Strategic Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a customer focused public library service to people living, working or studying in Northern Ireland which contributes to societal wellbeing. • Create strong mutually beneficial regional and local partnerships, including with other public services and community planning partners, to develop libraries as access points for a wide range of services. • Reduce barriers to library use especially for those at risk of being socially excluded. • Raise awareness and increase understanding of library services with customers, the general public and stakeholders. 	<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. loans and renewals against target. No. e-loans against target. No. new members against target. No. active members against target. 95% of branch libraries opened and / or providing services. Positive customer satisfaction rating. ¹

Outcome Area: Inspired, informed and literate children and adults

Strategic Actions:

- Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults.
- Provide access to Heritage resources and services to the widest possible audience.
- Improve digital services, access and literacy.
- Promote access to information, information literacy and support children and adults to become more informed citizens.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

Participation in reading challenges – measured against target.

Number of learning opportunities to improve digital literacy – measured against target.

95% of branch libraries providing Wi-Fi / Public Access Terminals.

95% of libraries delivering at least one core activity regularly. ²

No. of Wi-Fi / Public Access Terminal uses – measured against target.

Outcome Area: Effective Governance and delivery

Strategic Actions:

- Maintain an effective organisational and governance framework and support and develop our people to enable delivery of high quality public services.
- Make best use of available resources to support identified priorities and deliver an effective and valued public library service.
- Develop and implement an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) approach to business planning and performance measurement.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

Annual net spend (resource and capital) will be within budget. Underspend will be minimised to ≤1% of budget.

Capital and minor works programmes will be implemented in accordance with the agreed timetable and budget.

Reduce overall sickness absence levels, FTE days lost, to 11.50 days or less (from the baseline figure of 13.90 days at 31 March 2023).

95% of ICT service provision standards will be met.

98% of invoices will be paid within 30 working days. ³

90% of invoices will be paid within 10 working days.

95% of Internal Audit service targets and standards will be met.

- ¹ *The primary source of data will be the Continuous Household Survey with supplementary data from the Libraries NI Triennial Customer Survey where this is available.*
- ² *Regularly is defined as at least once per month.*
- ³ *Invoices paid within 30 working days is an internal service target and not a formal KPI and is included for reporting purposes only.*

6. Financing Our Services

6.1 In the continuing absence of the NI Executive and with the effective suspension of the normal public sector budget setting and financial allocation processes the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (SoS) has put in place contingency arrangements to enable public services to be maintained. The Department for Communities provided Libraries NI with an indicative resource allocation on 30 March 2023 of £27,486,000 requiring that in light of the budget uncertainties steps be taken to carefully manage expenditure for 2023/24 and that no new programmes or projects be progressed or new commitments entered into which would lead to further inescapable expenditure or increase any potential pressure faced.

The initial indicative allocation was subsequently revised by DfC, on 12 May 2023, and was increased to £29,013,000. This was confirmed as the Resource Budget Allocation for Libraries NI on 22 June 2023.

6.2 The resource allocation for 2023/24 presents an extremely challenging environment in which to plan and deliver public library services throughout the remainder of the year. With the economy in general remaining volatile and many of the financial pressures seen in the previous year continuing to impact the reduced resource allocation and removal of supplementary funding support seen in 2022/23 requires stringent controls on expenditure to be implemented and monitored closely throughout the remainder of the financial year.

6.3 A draft Financial Control Plan has been prepared on the basis of the indicative resource allocation and a series of planning assumptions about inflationary pressures, market trends and pressures anticipated to materialise in 2023/24.

6.4 Based on current projections, we anticipate expenditure against the resource allocation in 2023/24 will be as set out in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Category of Spend

Category of Spend	£000's
Staff	18,081
Stock	260
Premises	5,058
Supplies and services	6,007
Vehicle	250
Sub-total	29,656
Income	(643)
Total Net Expenditure	29,013

- 6.5 Following an initial indicative capital funding allocation of £3.631 million a revised allocation of £5.531 million has been confirmed largely limiting expenditure to inescapable and existing contractually committed projects, including ongoing delivery of the e3 ICT project, commencement of construction of the replacement library facility for Fivemiletown and delivery of a number of smaller project to address health and safety issues.

7. Governance and Delivering the Business Plan

- 7.1 Libraries NI has a corporate governance framework which specifies organisation and governance structures, including roles and responsibilities, to ensure proper and effective management and delivery of plans and priorities within available resources. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring delivery of the Libraries NI Business Plan and is supported in this by two Directors who manage core business groups to deliver library services to the public and to provide support services within the organisation. Arrangements are in place for regular monitoring of the Business Plan and the Libraries NI Board and Committees provide scrutiny and oversight.

- 7.2 Libraries NI has a well-established framework for risk management. A number of risks identified in 2022/23 are likely to continue be relevant in 2023/24 and these include:

- the challenging financial and business planning environment, including a reduction in funding allocations
- the impact of industrial action, commenced in June 2023
- the need to complete the next stage of organisation restructuring and to recruit to vacant posts in a challenging recruitment environment.

- 7.3 At the start of each business cycle a fundamental review of the corporate risk register is undertaken with a view to ensuring a strategic focus is maintained on key risks to the achievement of objectives and targets.

Appendix 1: Libraries NI Board Members

Professor Bernard Cullen	Chairperson
Councillor Julie Gilmour	Vice Chairperson
Councillor Alistair Cathcart	
Councillor Cheryl Brownlee	
Councillor Peter Johnston	
Councillor Andrew McAuley	
Councillor Martin McRandal	
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	
Mr John Peto	
Miss Linda Wilson	

Board membership as at 6 July 2023.

Appendix 2: Libraries NI - Organisation Structure

