



CORPORATE PLAN

2016 – 2020

(Approved by Department for Communities

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CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive	ii
1. Who We Are	1
2. Looking Back	3
3. Performance Measures	5
4. Looking Forward: The Planning Context	5
5. Our Corporate Goals and Strategic Objectives	11
6. Measuring Outcomes	15

Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive

We are pleased to present this Corporate Plan which serves as Libraries NI's strategic framework for action for the period 2016 – 2020. It sets out corporate goals and associated high level objectives, closely linked to wider government priorities with the aim of making a lasting and sustainable contribution to the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Libraries constitute an extensive network of shared public spaces, free at the point of access with dedicated and professional staff who are committed to providing help and support to assist people, no matter what their background or circumstances, to access knowledge, information and ideas, thereby opening up a world of opportunities for everyone. Libraries encourage a love of reading as the basis for developing literacy skills, which are the foundation for success in education and employment and an important gateway to personal development as well as social and economic participation. Libraries are a valued and trusted resource at the heart of communities, providing space and opportunities to learn and to connect and they are held in high regard by the public.

The next four years will present significant challenges for Libraries NI. The continued constrained public expenditure environment, with an expected real terms decline in funding levels over the coming years, means that we must focus our efforts where we can have the greatest impact, while being mindful also of our statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive service for everyone who lives, works or studies in Northern Ireland. We must continue to refresh and update our approaches in line with the changing needs and expectations of our customers. Our services must be efficient and provide value for money and we must ensure that our organisation continues to be fit for purpose. This Corporate Plan sets an ambitious direction of travel and we are committed to its delivery.

The Plan has been developed in the months immediately preceding elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Thereafter there will be a new Programme for Government and the existing 12 government Departments will be replaced by nine. Responsibility for Libraries NI will transfer to the new Department for Communities. It is our view that Libraries NI can make a significant contribution to the new Department as a local access point to many of the services being delivered both by it and other Departments, thus helping to facilitate joined-up approaches to service delivery in all communities and particularly in those which are disadvantaged.

We are grateful to the successive Ministers of Culture, Arts and Leisure and to the officials in the Department for their support for Libraries NI over the years and for their recognition of the contribution made by the public library service to delivering DCAL's vision. We look forward to building similar sound working relationships in the new Department for Communities as we take forward this Corporate Plan

Bernard Cullen
Chairperson

Irene M Knox
Chief Executive

1. Who we are

1.1 The primary duty of the Northern Ireland Library Authority (known as Libraries NI), 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. In doing so we are required to:

- secure that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to library materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements of adults and children (whether by keeping adequate stocks, by arrangements with other bodies concerned with library services or by any other means); and
- have regard to the desirability of:
 - encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service
 - providing advice as to the use of the library service and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using the service
 - promoting literacy and lifelong learning
 - maintaining a collection of library materials relevant to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland
 - making library premises available for cultural and community activities
 - meeting any special requirements of adults and children by any appropriate means.

1.2 The Board of Libraries NI, when fully constituted, comprises a Chairperson and eighteen Members, the majority of whom are councillors within the meaning of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. The Board is appointed by the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

1.3 Our Vision

A visible, accessible and inclusive library service at the heart of communities, changing 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 customers, 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 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 integrity, maintaining high standards of governance, responsible leadership and efficient operations.

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

1.6 Our Key Principles

- We will plan regionally and deliver services locally
- We will strive for equity of provision with targeted interventions to meet particular needs in local communities
- We will encourage and share best practice
- We will develop mutually beneficial strategic partnerships to widen access and optimise the use of scarce resources
- We will engage with communities to ensure that the services being delivered are meeting local needs.

1.7 Our network

Our services are delivered through a network of 96 libraries, two heritage libraries, 15 mobile libraries and 10 homecall vehicles, 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 and eMagazines and other online resources, many of which can also be accessed from home
- 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
- 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
- storytimes, rhythm and rhyme sessions and other activities for children
- reading groups for children, teenagers and adults
- study, meeting and shared social space.

2. Looking Back

2.1 The period covered by the Corporate Plan 2011 - 2015 was characterised by a very challenging economic climate with significant financial constraints in the public sector and associated budget reductions year on year. The key focus during the period was seeking to develop and deliver effective services in line with our priorities and in support of the strategic priorities of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) and the Programme for Government while at the same time realising the efficiencies required by the budget cuts through the implementation of annual Savings Delivery Plans.

2.2 Our strategic priorities in the 2011- 2015 period centred on four key objectives as follows:

- **Increase participation in the public library service**
- **Improve delivery of the public library service**
- **Promote and enhance understanding of the role and value of the public library service**
- **Ensure effective governance and adherence to statutory requirements**

2.3 Our work in support of these objectives included:

- developing and, following public consultation, implementing a new strategy for mobile library provision, designed to target services at those who most need them as well as increase use and efficiency
- addressing DCAL's key priority of Promoting Equality and Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion by allocating additional resources to those libraries serving the most deprived communities and providing a range of outreach services to seek to remove barriers to use and increase participation
- procuring and successfully implementing e2, a major IS/ICT project which replaced or updated all Libraries NI's public and corporate information systems, transforming the delivery of public library services to meet the changing demands of customers, support digital inclusion and leverage

advances in technology to enable the service to be delivered in a more effective and efficient manner

- initiating a number of strategic partnerships with other statutory agencies, including the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), and the Department of Education (DE) in order to promote joined up working on mutually agreed priorities and enhance services for library users
- delivering Health in Mind, a Big Lottery funded project, led by Libraries NI, in partnership with four mental health charities, to provide adults affected by poor mental health with an opportunity to improve their lives through reading, the provision of up-to-date and relevant information and the acquisition of self-help skills
- providing a wide range of programmes, events and activities to support reading and reader development, children's and young people's services, learning and information, digital inclusion, cultural and creative development and heritage and digitisation
- providing talks and exhibitions to mark significant anniversaries relevant to the Decade of Commemorations, making use of Libraries NI's extensive, and often unique heritage resources
- celebrating important cultural events, such as Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture, 2013, the annual Creativity Month, initiated by DCAL and Culture Night by providing a programme of related events
- opening new library buildings in Draperstown, Kilkeel and Lisnaskea and undertaking major refurbishments to Brownlow, Crossmaglen, Dromore, Dungannon, Falls Road, Fintona, Larne, Ormeau Road, Rathfriland, Shankill, Suffolk and Woodstock libraries
- introducing free downloadable eBooks and audiobooks, eMagazines and other online resources, many of which can be accessed by library users from their own homes
- implementing voluntary redundancies on an annual basis in order to assist with meeting financial targets.
- completing Stage 2 of the Strategic Review of Library Services across Northern Ireland to ensure a sustainable library network
- carrying out two public consultations to mitigate the impact of reductions in opening hours, required to meet savings targets.

3. Performance Measures

- 3.1 Libraries NI's Annual Reports¹ for the period 2011/12 – 2014/15 contain detailed information on our work and include annual Key Performance Indicators, agreed with DCAL.
- 3.2 DCAL's Corporate Plan and Balanced Scorecard 2011 – 2015 included five key measures and associated annual milestone targets for Libraries NI as follows:
- number of people using libraries annually
 - proportion of libraries delivering regular rhythm and rhyme sessions
 - proportion of libraries delivering quality assured programmes of class visits
 - proportion of libraries delivering one-to-one assistance or events to support digital inclusion
 - delivery of e2.

Performance in relation to these measures is shown in Appendix 1.

4. Looking Forward: The Planning Context

- 4.1 In developing this Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020 and the associated Business Plan 2016/17, consideration has been given to the impact on libraries and library use of the public policy, economic, social and technological environment as well as key governmental priorities and the outcome of various reviews previously undertaken by Libraries NI.

Public policy environment

- 4.2 Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly take place in May 2016. Thereafter a new Programme for Government (PfG) will be agreed. In the absence of a new PfG, this Corporate Plan is predicated on the five key strategic, inter-connected and interdependent priorities contained in the 2011 – 15 PfG, namely:
- growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future
 - creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being
 - protecting our people and the environment and creating safer communities
 - building a strong and shared community

¹ Annual Reports can be accessed at <http://www.librariesni.org.uk/AboutUs/OurOrg/Pages/Annual-Report-and-Accounts.aspx>

- delivering high quality and efficient public services.

4.3 Particular elements of the PfG which have been taken into account in developing this Corporate Plan are as follows:

- the Northern Ireland Executive's commitment to help reduce poverty, promote equality and tackle existing patterns of disadvantage and division through the *Delivering Social Change Framework*
- *Together: Building a United Community*, which reflects the Executive's commitment to improving community relations and building a united and shared society
- the development and implementation of a strategy to reduce economic inactivity through skills, training, incentives and job creation
- the inclusion of social clauses in public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction
- the modernisation of the public library service which is a building block for delivering high quality and efficient public library services.

4.4 During 2013 DCAL carried out a review of Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries, the Department's policy framework for the public library service in Northern Ireland, which was originally published in 2006, and concluded that the policy remained relevant. It was determined, however, that the associated Public Library Standards should be revised. As a result, a revised set of Public Library Standards², relating to tackling poverty and social exclusion, participation, customer satisfaction, access, stock and access to ICT, was published covering the period 2014 – 2019. Account has been taken of these Public Library Standards in developing this Corporate Plan.

4.5 Following elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly in May 2016, the existing 12 government Departments will be replaced by nine and responsibility for Libraries NI will transfer to the new Department for Communities. In developing this Corporate Plan we have been mindful also of these new arrangements. It is our view that Libraries NI can make a significant contribution to the new Department for Communities, which, we understand, will have a major focus on the delivery of social policy. We will work to reinforce the importance of libraries as a local access point to many of the services being delivered both by the new Department and other Departments,

² The Public Library Standards can be accessed at the following link: https://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dcal/delivering-tomorrows-libraries-public-library-standards-2014-19_0.pdf

thus helping to facilitate joined-up approaches to service delivery in all communities and particularly in those which are disadvantaged.

- 4.6 Government has made significant investments in the library network and infrastructure over the last few years, including through the refurbishment and modernisation of many library buildings and the procurement of new mobile libraries as well as through the e2 project which provides fast broadband as well as free WiFi in every library. It is important that the benefits of these investments are fully realised and given that 89% of the population live within two miles of a branch library or mobile library stop, there is tremendous potential for libraries to provide local access to and support for a range of citizen-focused services.
- 4.7 Our libraries already offer a wide range of programmes which contribute to social and economic wellbeing and many of these programmes are delivered in partnership with other organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors, with which we have agreed Memoranda of Understanding. We believe that there will be opportunities in the new Department to extend these partnerships and build new ones to support individuals and communities and we will continue to work positively with the range of organisations both within the new Department for Communities and across government to seek to optimise the potential and opportunities offered by the reorganisation.

Economic environment

- 4.8 Corporate and Business planning is taking place in the context of a one-year budget, agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly on 13 January 2016, which provides that cash savings of 5.7% will be required against the opening baselines in 2015/16. Additional unavoidable pressures, including inflation and an increase in National Insurance contributions mean that the actual savings that Libraries NI will be required to make amount to 7.28% (£2.143 million) when compared to the 2015/16 opening baseline.
- 4.9 Realising the efficiencies required by the proposed budget settlement while, at the same time, continuing to deliver effective services will present significant challenges and means that difficult decisions have to be made. Given the level of budget cuts already experienced in the last number of years and despite best efforts to protect frontline services, it is inevitable that there will be a detrimental impact on these services. Savings Delivery Plans have been submitted to the Department setting out the action that will be required, which includes a further reduction in opening hours in the largest libraries, reducing the stock budget, and cuts to the maintenance and various miscellaneous budgets.

- 4.10 The Budget 2016-17 has been prepared for a single year to give new Departments and new Ministers an opportunity to determine priorities and funding allocations after the Northern Ireland Assembly elections in May 2016 for a multi-year Budget from 2017-18 to 2019-20. It is expected that there will be a continued real-term decline in funding levels for the public sector during the lifetime of this Corporate Plan, which means, more than ever, that our planning must be evidence-based i.e. informed by a sound understanding of our actual and potential customers and their needs and expectations now as well as by knowledge of programmes and projects that have impacted positively on the lives of individuals and communities. It must take account also of the need to rethink and reframe the current service delivery model to ensure continued sustainability into the future.
- 4.11 The economic value of the public library service has been acknowledged in various pieces of research, most recently in work commissioned by the Archives, Libraries and Museums Alliance (ALMA UK)³. This survey of a sample of users of libraries estimated that in Northern Ireland:
- the library service supports 327 jobs over and above those directly employed by Libraries NI
 - for every £1 spent on delivering the service, 13 pence is generated within local supply chains through expenditure on local goods and services.

Social Change

- 4.12 In an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural society the promotion of social inclusion towards a shared and better future for all citizens remains a high priority. We live in a society where much inequality still exists and where not everybody has an equal opportunity to develop their talents to the full. The Northern Ireland Executive recognises that actions to address poverty and tackle disadvantage are prerequisites for social progress and is committed, through the PfG, to addressing inequality and unfairness and creating conditions that support inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- 4.13 Public libraries are widely recognised as welcoming, accessible, trusted and shared spaces, embedded in communities and used by people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds to pursue leisure and learning and to have access to high quality information resources. Libraries NI will continue to ensure that its services are delivered in welcoming and accessible environments and that they are available to all sections of the community. Opportunities will be provided for people to explore their own and other cultures and cultural heritage and, through the promotion of our heritage resources, we will contribute to the realisation of the Commemorations Strategy.

³ The Economic Value of Library Services (ERS on behalf of ALMA US, March 2014)

Technological Development

- 4.14 Over the last few years the pace and scale of technological change has been exponential and will continue to be so into the future. Digital technologies and the growth of the social web, including how people create and share content and networking now play a central role in the lives of citizens in the 21st century, profoundly affecting how we live and how society functions. An increasing number of resources are now available online and digital literacy plays an important role in shaping the nature of community development and building social capital. As the use and impact of new technologies increases and government agendas shift to focus on “digital first”, the impact of the digital divide becomes even starker. In such circumstances, access to ICT, and to the skills necessary to make effective use of it, are essential prerequisites.
- 4.15 Digital inclusion is essential for the social, economic and educational advantages of life in the modern world and we will continue to provide free access for library users to the internet, including free Wi-Fi in every library, so that library users can access the wealth of resources that are available online. In combination with providing digital access, we will assist people to develop the skills necessary to access, evaluate and use appropriate information which is critical to closing the digital divide.
- 4.16 Technology offers significant potential for the development of new approaches to the delivery of effective and efficient library services and during the period of this Corporate Plan, subject to the limitation on resources, we will seek to optimise the benefits of e2, the IT system, while beginning planning for its replacement in the latter part of the period.

Customers

- 4.17 Libraries NI has undertaken a number of strategic reviews of provision in recent years, involving widespread public consultation. These reviews were important in terms of ensuring a network of sustainable libraries and an effective and efficient mobile library service as well as, in some cases, addressing savings necessitated by previous budget settlements. A significant amount of information has been gathered also, particularly in relation to the expectations and requirements that library users and the general public have of the services that we provide and should be providing.
- 4.18 Our customers have told us that:
- libraries are an important resource for many people who cannot afford to buy books or have a personal computer with internet access

- libraries play a key role in supporting people who are unemployed and seeking work and who use the library and, in particular, the free access to the internet, to look for jobs and build their skills.
- they value the resources, support and encouragement available in libraries for learners of all ages, some of whom have had negative experiences of formal education
- older people, in particular, view libraries as places of social interaction
- libraries are community hubs and this is particularly important in rural areas where there is often a lack of other public buildings
- libraries and library staff make an important contribution to the development of early learning skills through, for example, their work with pre-school children and their parents or carers;
- the role of libraries in supporting and extending literacy skills through work with schools and school age children should not be underestimated
- the library is a recognised shared space - in some areas the only shared community facility - and that it contributes to community cohesion and social inclusion
- the library is an important and trusted source of information, including about services available from other organisations.

4.19 Research⁴ carried out by DCAL confirms that the value placed on public library services by both users and non-users is high. Non-users recognised that the public library was an important community resource and that it benefited in particular children, older people and those who did not have Internet access at home. During the period of this Corporate Plan we will seek to build on the positive outcome of this research, as well as the feedback from the various strategic reviews to maintain participation and satisfaction levels.

Staff

4.20 The last few years have been characterised by organisation-wide change, with associated high levels of uncertainty created by the potential and actual closure of libraries, reductions in opening hours, the implementation of a new mobile library strategy and voluntary redundancies as well as the inevitable upheaval caused by the creation of a new organisation and harmonising and streamlining practices. The implementation of e2 has also changed significantly how staff work and interact with customers. Despite all the changes that have taken place, staff members have continued to provide a

⁴ Willingness to Pay Study into the Value Placed on Public Libraries in NI (RSM McClure Watters on behalf of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, November 2012)

high quality service and, during public consultations, our users told us that they value highly the knowledge, skills and support provided by our staff.

- 4.21 Given the draft budget situation it is inevitable that further change will be experienced as the opening hours of libraries are reviewed and reduced and, subject to funding being available centrally, a further voluntary redundancy scheme will be implemented to reduce staffing costs. We recognise also the need to continue to engage with staff throughout this change process and provide them with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can continue to deliver high quality and customer-focused services.

5 Our Corporate Goals and Strategic Objectives

- 5.1 In developing our Corporate Goals and associated strategic objectives for the period 2016 – 2020, we have taken into account the planning context and the need to ensure that our work aligns with key government priorities as well as building on the existing strengths of the public library service.

Corporate Goal: Supporting literacy and promoting a love of reading

- 5.2 The value of reading lies in the benefits it brings to individuals, to communities and to society as a whole. It is an essential life skill, a source of enjoyment, inspiration and wellbeing and a gateway to learning and information. Reading and the development and enhancement of literacy skills are central to creating a learning culture and to addressing social exclusion, building community identity and developing responsible citizenship. Readers are active participants in the world around them which is critical to individual and social wellbeing.
- 5.3 The development of a love of reading and of literacy skills is a key early intervention and an important element in equipping children and young people with skills for life. Research clearly shows that reading well is essential to tackling the effects of poverty on children.⁵ Free access to books, other reading material and information, whether in hard copy or online, together with opportunities to develop a love of reading from an early age engages children and young people in positive and enjoyable activities, improves literacy skills and facilitates lifelong learning, which in turn contributes to breaking the cycle of deprivation and educational under-achievement.
- 5.4 We will support literacy and promote a love of reading by:
- providing books and other printed and online materials in a way that delivers access to a wide range of quality resources to meet the needs of the entire community

⁵ Read On Get On How reading can help children escape poverty (Save the Children, 2014)

- developing, delivering, facilitating and supporting programmes and activities for children and young people which foster a love of reading and enhance literacy skills
- developing, delivering, facilitating and supporting programmes for adults which encourage wider reading, develop the confidence of individual readers within a supportive environment and provide opportunities to share reading experiences.

Corporate Goal: Contributing to social and community wellbeing

- 5.5 As community hubs, libraries are free, inclusive, shared, accessible, and trusted spaces, embedded in communities and used by people of all ages, cultures and background. They enable people to access a wide variety of learning, information and social resources that can make a difference to their quality of life, including their health and well-being, in both the short and long term.
- 5.6 All libraries serve a wide range of customers including those who are at risk of social exclusion. A number of libraries are situated at the heart of urban communities which suffer high levels of deprivation and these libraries have a key role to play in supporting those who are disadvantaged or excluded. In rural areas also, where deprivation often manifests itself differently from urban areas, the extensive network of libraries is recognised as making a significant contribution to tackling social isolation, inequality and disadvantage.
- 5.7 Public libraries in Northern Ireland have a long tradition of collecting and preserving material which relates to our cultural heritage. Heritage collections include resources of interest to all communities in Northern Ireland and beyond. Access to cultural heritage enriches society through nurturing creativity, imagination, a sense of place and a sense of pride and is of central importance in supporting and enriching the community's understanding, not only of its local identity but also of the past and its role in shaping the present.
- 5.8 In an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural society the promotion of social inclusion towards a shared and better future for all citizens remains a high priority. Libraries are spaces where cultural traditions, both local and in the wider national and world context, can be encountered, experienced, examined and celebrated in a neutral environment, increasing understanding of similarities and differences and contributing to greater community cohesion.
- 5.9 We will contribute to social and community wellbeing by:
- proactively seeking to reduce barriers to use, especially in areas of social need and in rural areas and among groups who are at risk of being socially excluded

- continuing to develop and promote libraries as community hubs which facilitate local access to a wide range of services, including through mutually beneficial partnerships with other organisations
- providing information, programmes and services that contribute to health and wellbeing
- developing, delivering, facilitating and supporting programmes and activities which celebrate cultural diversity and contribute to community cohesion
- continuing to build Libraries NI's extensive and unique collections of heritage material and utilising them to stimulate discussion and debate and increase understanding of our shared cultural heritage.

Corporate Goal: Promoting economic wellbeing

- 5.10 We live in a society in which knowledge, skills and access to information are becoming increasingly important to people's lives, economically, socially and as citizens. The internet has transformed every aspect of public, private and work life. Using e-Services can improve people's lives, whether through cutting household bills, finding a job, carrying out transactions online or maintaining contact with distant family and friends. However many people still lack the basic digital skills and capabilities to realise the benefits of the digital environment. Digital and information literacy are of central importance in enabling people to learn, participate, improve their economic position and communicate with others.
- 5.11 Investing in skills and employability is a vital part of economic success, helping people to enter employment or improve their skills, thereby delivering greater social inclusion. Public libraries provide a learning network that runs parallel with formal education but also extends far beyond it. They complement and reinforce formal learning, providing a supportive and unthreatening environment where people from all backgrounds, including those with poor experiences of formal education and few, if any qualifications, can receive encouragement, advice and support to get back on the ladder of learning.
- 5.12 We will promote economic wellbeing by:
- supporting digital inclusion through the provision of programmes, IT equipment and connectivity
 - providing access to a range of information sources and opportunities to enhance information literacy skills
 - offering services and creating opportunities that improve the life skills of children, young people, adults and families to assist them to achieve their creative and learning potential

- providing supported access to programmes and services that develop people's financial capability and enhance their employability.

Corporate Goal: Supporting and developing our people

- 5.13 Libraries NI's most important asset is its people. Our staff are dedicated, committed and professional in their approach. They have a wide range of skills and abilities; they know their communities; and they are trusted and valued by the public.
- 5.14 The seven years since Libraries NI was established have been characterised by organisation-wide change, with associated high levels of uncertainty for staff. It is inevitable that further changes will take place over the period of this Corporate Plan with reduced levels of public sector funding and as the environment and the needs of our customers change. We recognise the need to continue to engage with staff and their representatives throughout the change process and to ensure effective two-way communication.
- 5.15 In this changing environment and as digital technologies continue to develop at an exponential rate, it is essential that we develop staff's skills so that they can provide a responsive, effective, user-focused public service that is part of community life in the 21st century. We want to invest in the wellbeing of our people helping them to be resilient in the face of change and to create a culture where staff are encouraged to be creative and innovative and are motivated to perform to the best of their abilities.
- 5.16 We will support and develop our people by:
- creating an organisational framework that embeds a culture of economic and efficient service delivery and supports future developments
 - equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to lead, develop and deliver responsive and customer-focused services
 - empowering staff to make decisions appropriate to their role, recognising their experience and expertise and encouraging creativity and innovation in support of service delivery and development
 - engaging staff through effective communication and providing them with accurate and timely information and encouraging feedback.

Corporate Goal: Delivering high quality services

- 5.17 Libraries NI is committed to ensuring the highest standards of governance and accountability, underpinned by openness and transparency, to ensure that stakeholders can have confidence in the organisation's decision-making processes and actions and in the management of its activities.

5.18 Over the period of this Corporate Plan more must be achieved with less across the public sector. We will use our allocated resources to deliver identified priorities, taking account of the wider Programme for Government and feedback from customers and other stakeholders. Challenging performance targets will be set and regularly monitored to ensure that services are effective and deliver value for money.

5.19 We will deliver high quality services by:

- embedding good governance throughout the organisation, recognising the importance of performance measurement and accountability
- making the best use of available resources now and into the future to address identified priorities and deliver value for money
- implementing reliable information management practices that are compliant with statutory obligations and which support planning and decision-making and enable accurate monitoring of performance
- communicating with customers and stakeholders to raise awareness and increase understanding of our services and to welcome feedback.

6. Measuring Outcomes

6.1 Effective planning, performance management and reporting are vital in ensuring that the needs of service users are met, that the organisation continues to improve and that we open and transparent about progress and risks. The performance management framework in Libraries NI consists of:

- the Corporate Plan which sets out the Corporate Goals and high level objectives linked to the PfG and DCAL strategies for library services.
- an annual Business Plan which sets out the actions we need to be 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 DCAL on progress in relation to the annual Business Plan.
- Service Plans which translate the Business Plan into 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;

- the Annual Report and Accounts which provide detailed information on our work during the year.

6.2 Subject to the availability of resources, we are striving to achieve the following high level outcomes over the four-year period of this Corporate Plan:

- achievement of the Public Library Standards 2014 – 2019 ⁶
- activities for children and young people to assist in fostering a love of reading and enhancing literacy skills will be available in all libraries and online
- support for learning and the development of life skills, information literacy, financial capability, digital inclusion and employability will be available in all libraries and online
- opportunities to access cultural heritage will be available in all libraries and through online resources
- staff will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead and deliver customer-focused services
- public libraries will be recognised as important community assets, delivering on Programme for Government priorities and where citizens can access a range of services provided by Libraries NI, its partners and other organisations
- an annual level of internal audit assurance of at least satisfactory will be achieved each year as well as an annual Report to those Charged with Governance identifying no priority one recommendations
- annual resource and capital expenditure will be within 1% underspend on total budget annually.

The most significant risk to the achievement of these outcomes is the uncertainty regarding funding levels going forward.

⁶ The Public Library Standards can be accessed at the following link: https://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dcal/delivering-tomorrows-libraries-public-library-standards-2014-19_0.pdf

