**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

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| Title of Meeting | Suffolk Libraries IPS - Board Meeting |
| Date | Thursday 27th August 2020 |
| Place | Virtual Meeting via Zoom |
| Time | 9:30am – 11am |
| Board Members: | Tony Brown, Sylvia Knights, Bruce Leeke (Chief Executive), Sarah Wilson, Maureen Garratt Simpson, Sally Irvine, Sue Buck, Alison Leyshon, Kathy Oliver |
| **PRESENT:** | * Tony Brown (Chair) * Sylvia Knights * Sue Buck * Bruce Leeke (Chief Executive) * Sarah Wilson * Kathy Oliver * Maureen Garratt Simpson * Sally Irvine * Alison Leyshon * Sam Cayford |
| **In attendance:** | * Mandy Wilkinson (Head of Finance) * Sarah Thacker (Clerk to the Board) * Giles Kerkham (Larking Gowen – Item 2 only) |

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| **Action** |
| **1.** | **Welcome and apologies:**  Apologies from Krystal Vittles who was on annual leave. | **TB** |
| **2.** | **The Signing of the Annual Report and Accounts**  Giles Kerkham (GK) of Larking Gowen attended the meeting for the formal signing of the agreed accounts and the representation letter.  The audit has been completed under lockdown and all done remotely and electronically, and was a success.  The accounts reflect on the year to March 2020, which included the very start of lockdown. There is some impact at the end of March around income and expenditure due to lockdown and the disclosures reflect this.  The statement of financial activities shows income at £7.58million up from £7.22million. The biggest change is the expansion of the prison library contract with People Plus which brought in extra income and expenditure.  Net deficit for the year unrestricted funds of £47k and restricted funds slightly up by £19k this was due to £56k coming in and expenditure of only £11k.  In relation to income and expenditure, a lot of the discussion during the audit related to cut off point for the COVID support grants and how these were recognised. The Head of Finance made a strong case for including the grants in 2020/21 which meant the same Net result as presented in the original year end submitted by Suffolk Libraries.  The balance sheet has £73k of fixed assets that includes additions of circa £24k which was the cost of finishing off the Hub. What is not in additions is the circa £62k which includes works at Aldeburgh. This is covered in a separate disclosure in the expenditure notes.  Going concern policy is very important and this note has two points:   1. Suffolk Libraries main library services contract with SCC runs until 2022, at which point the contract may be retendered. 2. The impact of COVID was felt with the closure of libraries however all major income contracts have continued, with funding continuing to be received while library buildings were closed. The Directors have prepared detailed financial forecasts for the next 12 months, updated from original budgets to take into account revised expectations in light of the pandemic. These show the charity has sufficient reserves and cash headroom for the period. Based on this the auditors concluded Suffolk Libraries has adequate resources to continue for the foreseeable future, and certainly more than 12 months.   Trustees report has extensive description of what Suffolk Libraries has achieved in the year and the Chair’s report, references the exceptional circumstances, but the sense of purpose which has guided the libraries has remained consistent.  Reserves policy, target is 2 months of essential running costs at £950k verses actual of £612k, which is a decrease of £48k and a gap of £338k. It is not expected this gap will be narrowed during the current financial year.  A board member noted from a cash perspective we have a year on year swing, last year a decrease in debtors and a Net cash inflow, this year increase in debtors and a Net cash outflow, but current assets are the same. Presumably it’s a timing difference?  GK advised its due to a tranche of the main contract from SCC, last year this came in before 31st March which was unusual and normally it’s 1st April.  The Chair noted the increase in income for the year over the previous year and presumed this was due to the increase in the prisons contract.  GK confirmed this is correct.  GK has advised electronic signatures are valid on the accounts due to current COVID restrictions.  The accounts will be formally signed electronically by the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, the Chair of the Board, the Honorary Secretary and Chief Executive.  GK and his team were thanked for their work on the accounts. Thanks, were also given to the Head of Finance and her team. | **GK** |
| **3.** | **Declarations of Interest:**  There were no declarations of interest. | **TB** |
| **4.** | **Minutes of previous meeting of 25th June 2020:**  The minutes were accepted as a true account of discussions. Thanks, were given to Nikki Hulse for taking the minutes.  **Matters arising:**  KO: Advised that the DRAFT text watermark is quite dark and makes the minutes hard to read and asked could this be altered.  ST: Advised she would look into whether this was possible. | **TB** |
| **5.** | **Updates from Committees:**  The Chair asked the committee Chairs to update the Board.  **Finance and Audit**  The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee gave the following verbal update of the meeting which took place on 23rd July 2020:   * Had a presentation and discussion around annual accounts. * The Chief Executive presented a report from IT highlighting that mobile drivers have now got their new devices and broadband connections, which is the last remaining IT relationship Suffolk Libraries had with SCC. * The majority of new PC’s have been installed at libraries, which is great considering the problems with lockdown and the replacement of Chromebases is still being considered by SCC. * The Head of Content and Resources attended the meeting. There was no SPINE update because of lockdown. * Sales of books through Amazon has continued and has been realising around £1,000 per month. * Bertram Books in Norwich closed during lockdown, considered if this would impact book prices in the future as they are a big distributor disappearing from the market. * Looked at figures for uptake on reading, Suffolk Libraries is bucking the trend overall with physical and digital we are up 8.5% which is brilliant. * The Head of Service Delivery presented a report relating to NPO. the Arts Council advised that they were going to extend the contract. Suffolk Libraries has now been advised, because of potential funding cuts, that the funding across years 4/5 may not be at the level we were anticipating. DCMS will be advising the Arts Council in March next year as to what funding will be. Libraries are advised they should still apply for the next round of NPO funding. * New graphic designer now appointed, BLOC cover 50% of the salary and they come under line management of as the Head of Digital and Marketing. * All aware of discussion around mobile libraries as per email recently sent. * In relation to property Suffolk Libraries have been made aware that SCC are standardising their leases Currently Suffolk Libraries is in discussion over the lease for the new Saxmundham Library. Some benefits built into the original leases are possibly not appearing in the new leases. Ongoing maintenance is something Suffolk Libraries needs to keep an eye on as an increasing cost moving forwards.   MW advised regarding the property leases the organisation has had supportive emails with Brian Prettyman (BP). BP confirmed that Suffolk Libraries should be able to maintain the leases as they come up for renewal, as they were. With this in mind it will be important to scrutinise every one in the future. Saxmundham is a shared building and SCC wanted each person in that building to have the same T&Cs. Therefore, this lease was slightly different to current ones the organisation has. Suffolk Libraries has managed to mitigate the changes although not completely. The organisation will try and ensure there are no detriments to it on the leases moving forwards. It’s not a planned aspiration of SCC to change Suffolk Libraries terms each time the organisation has a new lease.  The Chair asked what timescale is on the works for Saxmundham.  The Chief Executive advised building work to be carried out imminently, and that he was getting the final lease witnessed by a solicitor on 28/08/2020. Councillor Smith promised it would be ready by September next year it’s been delayed by COVID but timescale is still quite short.  **Governance and Risk**  No meeting has taken place however, the Chair of the Governance and Risk Committee gave the following verbal update:  Agreed previously that the Board should review the Risk Register prior to the AGM on 1st October. At the last G&R Committee there was certain actions for the management team to do in terms of updating the Risk Register. As the committee has not had a further meeting to update the register, the Chair of the Committee wanted to offer Board members and G&R Committee members two alternatives. Options are:   1. Bypass Committee and present the updated Risk Register direct to the Board 2. Hold a G&R meeting and review the risk register and then pass onto the Board   SB noted it depends how significant the amendments are. If they are profound then the scrutiny of the Committee would be worthwhile and appropriate. If they are more form, than substance then don’t spend time having a meeting and circulate straight to the Board.  AL advised there’s overlap in risks, some could be combined and mitigating actions that should have reduced the resultant risk score, so the risk score was unnecessarily high. The Committee doesn’t believe any risks have been excluded and there has been a lot of consideration of all the risks facing the organisation, it is just a question of housekeeping and tidying up.  SB advised from her part don’t trouble the committee and send straight to the Board.  SK noted she agrees with SB, from recollection it was housekeeping by the management team.  The Chief Executive agreed with SB and SK that the most efficient way is to send straight to Board.  The Chair agreed, asked for Risk Register be circulated ASAP and allow the Board a week to review. Send to the Chair of the Committee first to review then to the rest of the Board.  **HR**  The Chair of the HR Committee gave the following verbal update of the meeting which took place face to face on 30th July 2020:   * Looked at effects on staff of lockdown and emerging from lockdown, informed by the Compliance Managers detailed written and verbal reports on this. Committees view, so far so good, the continued fazing in of additional services is underway. * Good update on the focus group that has been established to talk with staff about what we could do to make their life’s better. This is a 2-month project and the appropriate amount of people have been recruited and are participating. * Cycle to work scheme looked at in detail and this has been described to staff in the Chief Executive’s bulletin email this morning. * Suffolk Libraries started this year with the ambition to view all staffing matters through the prism of a health and wellbeing. Looked at the training being undertaken and pleased to see that the organisation has a new training option which is designed to promote mental health resilience. Great that Suffolk Libraries is an organisation that takes its staff’s wellbeing so seriously.   The Chair noted that it was a very encouraging meeting and we seem to be an organisation positioning itself to lead by example.  **Health and Safety**  The Chair of the Health and Safety Committee gave the following verbal update of the meeting which took place on 7th August 2020:   * Focus was on approach to COVID, protecting both staff and customers. Included the use of occupational health specialists for those that felt they were at higher risk/vulnerable. * Staff wellbeing, there’s a section on the intranet with a range of resources and support that people can look up for managing staff’s particular needs. * Risk assessments carried out in consultation with staff for each building, plus improved cleaning, social distancing measures, Perspex screens are in place, staff are using face visors or masks and books coming back to the library are quarantined for 72 hours. * Had presentation of H&S policy statement. * Staff training highlighted the inclusion of a psychologicalfirst aid course. This includes recognising people in distress and supporting mental health for managers and other members of staff.   The Chair of the Committee noted that undertaking 44 risk assessments is a monumental task. An amazing amount has been achieved and the Committee wished to communicate its thanks to the Compliance Manager and his team.  MW advised the last Perspex screens have been received into Ipswich and are being sent out. | **TB**  **SK**  **AL**  **SB**  **MGS** |
| **6.** | **Management Reports:**  **Chief Executive Report**  The Chief Executive presented the report to the Board and highlighted the following points:   * Results of the Gallop survey are hugely encouraging in relation to the organisations approach of staff safety first. Great to receive positive feedback from staff team that they feel Suffolk Libraries is doing everything it can to support them. * Q1 Performance report for SCC - one amazing stat highlighted, during 3-month period of lockdown Suffolk Libraries managed every single day on average to engage 2,300 people in its live streaming or online activities. Engagement means that people are actually participating which is fantastic and an impressive stat. Highlighting the huge impact the organisation is having in reaching parts of the community that it hasn’t reached before. Positive about the future and how the organisation is going to translate this into new ways of working with people.   SW noted it’s interesting to see Suffolk Libraries mentioned in a couple of case studies, the Arts Council and Carnegie Trust. Can we see more information about that. It was useful to see the Social media engagement figures. What jumped out is the range of social media engagement between libraries with 258 in one library down to 1 in another. It would be interesting to know the reason for the disparity.  The Chief Executive advised he will share the results of the case studies when he has them. In relation to Social Media engagement Suffolk Libraries has run some training over the past couple of months. The organisation is also looking at this as part of the business planning process to ensure people have the right skills to use social media.  AL noted it is interesting the corporate face/page had fewer engagements than Lowestoft and that it is interesting that people are still going to their local library pages rather than the Suffolk libraries website. The local aspect is very important to them.  The Chief Executive highlighted that the main reason is each library has its own Facebook page and most of the sessions were delivered via Facebook Live.  SB noted a conversation with her local library manager around the pilot project of browsing which is being extremely well received. It was described as easy to manage the numbers in the library as with interest in Select & Collect disappearing customers are pleased to get back in the library.  MGS noted Suffolk people are a local minded people and having Facebook pages for each library gives people a great sense of belonging.  KO noted reservation are back in Southwold and that everyone is pleased that it is working. It is taking longer to get books into circulation as quarantine has to be done twice, but the system is still going well.  The Chair thanked everyone for the reports, thanks to all staff who have managed to respond to these unpredictable circumstances so constructively, with energy and creativity.  **Head of Finance Report**  **The Head of Finance presented her report to the Board.**  Thanks to the team from Larking Gowan for the audit that has been completed and accounts signed off.  Year to date loss £216k without taking into account the COVID grant which shows the impact the grants are having. The main reasons for the loss are a complete loss of fees and charges and no room hire income. The fees and charges will be coming back in October and the forecast within the report reflects that. Room hire is not expected to start until December.  There is a continual saving of employee cost against budget due to slightly reduced staff hours due to COVID restrictions.  The future is unknown and it is difficult to create an accurate forecast and therefore a prudent approach has been taken.  Expecting a neutral or soft landing at the end of the year.  Reserves not as high as Suffolk Libraries would like them to be but there are reserves there.  SK noted it’s a testament to Mandy and her team and the systems and processes she has in place that the process of the audit was able to be done virtually and smoothly. Thanks for ensuring we have such a robust system.  AL highlighted her confusion as to why there are negative numbers year to date in the income sections. It is assumed these are net figures. The Head of Finance confirmed this was correct. | **BL**  **MW** |
| **7.** | **Any other business:**  Health & Safety Policy Statement – sign off  MGS noted this was reviewed at the Health & Safety Committee and would like to recommend it for Board approval.  AL noted the fifth bullet point and in the current climate should the organisation include members of the public in that.  MGS and SK noted there are multiple signs up advising members of the public what to do.  SI noted the wording reasonably practical should where possible be avoided.  SB advised the Head of Compliance is referencing the occupier’s liability act. Suffolk Libraries obligation under legislation is to do all that is reasonably practical to keep its people safe. SB would be against removing that as it is in there for a reason. Referring to AL’s point relating to bullet point five Suffolk Libraries is referencing the legal obligations and responsibilities that its employees has as its agents. The organisation should not be implying, by mentioning customers in the same phrase, that it has legal obligations and responsibilities from a Health & Safety perspective. Customers have a duty to comply with the COVID legislation and guidance which Suffolk Libraries is trying to enforce with its signs. Customers do not have responsibility for keeping our building safe and SB would not favour changing the wording of bullet point 5 for these reasons.  The Chair recommended the policy statement to the Board for adoption, and the majority were in favour.  The Chair clarified the venue of the AGM. It will be held in the Wolsey Room at Ipswich County Library.  SK noted the community group meetings Suffolk Libraries had via Zoom were better attended than any previous meetings. SK suggested that groups being able to join virtually is a great opportunity for those who haven’t attended in the past.  The Chair noted an email will be going out to remind community group members of the deadline for the nominations and to clarify that Suffolk Libraries would like the nominees to attend the community group meetings.  SC noted that SCC had a positive contract meeting and confirmed they were pleased with how COVID has been managed by Suffolk Libraries and especially the way which libraries have really stepped up for their communities.  There was no other business to discuss. |  |
| **8.** | **Date of next Meeting:**  The next meeting will take place on Thursday 29th October 2020. |  |

The meeting closed at 10:48am