LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority

11 March 2010

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held on Thursday 11 March 2010 at 10.30 am in Antrim Library

PRESENT

Dr David Elliott
Alderman Hubert Nicholl
Councillor Mrs Anne Brolly
Councillor Charlie Casey
Councillor Sam Cole
Mr Roger Dixon
Councillor Mrs Roberta Dunlop
Councillor Miss Carla Lockhart
Mr Nigel Macartney
Ms Angela Matthews
Mr Alastair McDowell
Councillor Mrs Evelyne Robinson
Councillor Jim Rodgers
Councillor Seamus Shields
Ms Jane Williams

Chairperson
Vice Chairperson

APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Mr Pat Carvill
Councillor Allan Ewart
Councillor Cathal Mullaghan
Ms Helen Roulston
Mr Arthur Scott (Director of Culture, DCAL)

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive
Director of Planning & Performance
Director of Service Delivery
Director of Business Support
Organisational Development Manager

Ms Irene Knox
Mrs Anne Connolly
Ms Helen Osborn
Mr Terry Heron
Ms Pauline Martin

1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

1.1 The Chairperson reminded Members and Officers of the need to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest associated with any item on the agenda either now or at the relevant stage during the meeting. No conflicts of interest were declared.
2. CHAIRPERSON’S BUSINESS

2.1 The Chairperson welcomed Members to the new Antrim Library. It was noted that the Library had opened to the public on 1st February 2010 and that the official opening would be held later in the year. Members noted that Ms Helen Poston, Operations Manager would brief Members on Antrim Library under Any Other Business and a tour of the library would be available.

2.2 The Chairperson informed Members that the Chairperson of the Services Committee and he had attended the public consultation meetings on the strategic review of provision in the Greater Belfast area held in Rathcoole and Chichester Libraries (18 February) and Andersonstown Leisure Centre and Grosvenor House Conference Centre (23 February). He thanked other Members of the Board who had also attended meetings.

2.3 The Chairman informed Members that the meeting with the DCAL Minister to discuss the budget 2010/11, originally scheduled for 24 February, had been rescheduled at short notice, to 26 February. He had attended together with the Vice-Chairperson of the Board, the Chairperson of the Business Support Committee and the Chief Executive. Unfortunately the Chairperson of the Services Committee had been unable to attend on the revised date. The Chairperson reported that the meeting had been open and friendly and he felt very heartened by it.

2.4 The Vice-Chairperson reported that the DCAL Minister and his staff had been well briefed on the financial position and the Minister's Special Advisor had asked some pertinent questions. He said that the Minister demonstrated a clear understanding of the position of Libraries NI and was particularly interested in the development of Belfast Central Library.

2.5 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee added that she also felt very heartened by the meeting and that the case for Libraries NI had been put forward thoroughly and succinctly. While there was no indication of additional monies being available at the present time, she, and other Members in attendance, had been left with the impression that the Minister would consider the position if additional funding was to become available in year.

2.6 The Chairperson reported that he and the Chief Executive had met with Ms Rosalie Flanagan, the new Permanent Secretary, DCAL on 3 March and had a very useful discussion. He had invited Ms Flanagan to attend a future meeting of the Board.

2.7 It was agreed that a meeting of the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Board and Committees should be arranged to review the operation of Libraries NI Board and Committees.
3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

3.1 Members noted responses given by the Minister to Assembly Questions relating to Libraries NI since the last Board Meeting. Ms J Williams referred to the Assembly Question from Ms J McCann MLA and the subsequent response regarding Ballyhackamore Library and queried the disposal process if the Library were to be closed. The Chief Executive agreed to clarify the situation regarding the leasehold.

3.2 Members noted the Hansard Report of the NIPSA Briefing to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee on the strategic review of library provision in Greater Belfast.

3.3 It was noted that the meeting with Ms R Flanagan, DCAL Permanent Secretary, had been useful and it was hoped that she would be able to attend a meeting of the Board in the near future to meet Members.

3.4 The Chief Executive reported that the Director of Planning and Performance and she were scheduled to meet Newtownabbey Borough Council that afternoon regarding Cloughfern Library. A meeting had also been arranged with Belfast City Council on 16 March.

3.5 Councillor J Rodgers informed Members that it had been brought to his attention that, in a few instances, public representatives had been rude to some of the senior staff in Libraries NI and that that such behavior was unacceptable. Councillor Rodgers’ comments were endorsed by other Members and it was agreed that if such incidents were to reoccur, the Chief Executive of the relevant Council and / or the leader of the political grouping should be notified.

3.6 The Chief Executive thanked Members for their unanimous support. She said that it was heartening that the public and their representatives felt so passionately about the public library service and, in such circumstances, it was understandable that any proposal which could mean the closure of some libraries was likely to be met with opposition and that some meetings would be difficult.

3.7 Members reiterated their full and unanimous support for the work being undertaken by the Senior Management Team in respect of the consultation process on the strategic review of library provision in the Greater Belfast area.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON
11 FEBRUARY 2010

4.1 On a proposal by Alderman H Nicholl, seconded by Councillor Mrs R Dunlop, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010 were agreed as an accurate record.
5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2010

5.1 Members noted the document which had been circulated detailing actions taken as a result of discussion at, and decisions of, the previous meeting.

5.2 The Chief Executive drew Member’s attention in particular to the undernoted items.

Item 6: Ballynahinch Regional Administrative Centre

5.2.1 Ms H Osborn, Director of Service Delivery, updated Members regarding the consultation process.

5.2.2 Members noted that individual meetings had been held with staff and that the Senior Management Team had had a constructive meeting with NIPSA. Pre-screening information was being collected and when the consultation period had ended, equality screening would take place.

5.2.3 The consultation process would close on Tuesday 16 March 2010 and that to date 25 online questionnaires, 15 hard copy questionnaires and 15 letters had been received. A meeting had been held with a local Councillor and a meeting with the MP for the area had been arranged.

5.2.4 On Tuesday 9 March a “drop in” session had been held between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm whereby members of the public and users of the facility in Ballynahinch could visit and speak to senior staff. Twenty two people, including local Councillors and Kieran McCarthy MLA, a member of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, had attended with most interest being expressed in the local studies department and the importance of retaining the core County Down collection as a single entity. Other issues raised included the loss of jobs in Ballynahinch and a proposal that Ballynahinch should be the base for the new Libraries NI Headquarters.

5.2.5 Members were reminded that a visit to the Regional Offices in Ballynahinch had been arranged for Thursday 18 March 2010 at 2.00 pm.

Item 7: Meeting of the Services Committee (Strategic Review)

5.2.6 Mrs A Connolly, Director of Planning and Performance, updated Members on the strategic review of library provision in the Greater Belfast Area. Members had been provided with a summary of the draft EQIA and noted that the full document was available on the website.

5.2.7 Public consultation meetings had now ended although meetings were still taking place with Councils and some political representatives. Approximately 1,500 questionnaires had been received to date, together with a number of letters and some petitions. The consultation
documentation had been translated into Polish and a staff survey would be carried out.

5.2.8 Issues being raised include difficulties associated with transport, and particularly bus routes; access for children, older people and those with disabilities if libraries close and people have to travel further; a perceived disproportionate impact on East Belfast; and the fact that in some communities, the library is the only remaining public service.

5.2.9 Attendance at some public consultation meetings had been disappointing, but at all meetings members of the public had commented very positively on the helpfulness and professionalism of library staff.

5.2.10 During the ensuing discussion the following matters were raised:

- the importance of detailed consideration being given to possible alternatives in local communities if a decision is taken to close a library, including extending the mobile and outreach service, and the use of community centres and other community spaces where people gather as locations for library provision
- the potential for co-location with other statutory providers to improve footfall overall and share costs e.g. the Grove Wellbeing Centre
- potential partnerships that were being explored with Belfast City Council in respect of the former Girdwood Barracks site; the East Belfast Development Agency in respect of the former Templemore School site; and the Department of Social Development and West Belfast Strategic Partnership in respect of the former Andersonstown Barracks site
- the importance of consideration being given to ways of mitigating impact as part of the EQIA process
- the importance of consultation with people in local communities about alternatives if a decision is taken to close the library building
- improved on-line facilities so that people can access a range of authoritative information sources from home and increasing awareness of the on-line facilities that are available e.g. to reserve books.

Item 7.3 Strategic Outline Case for Belfast Central

5.2.11 The Chief Executive reported that the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure had approved the Strategic Outline Case for Belfast Central Library and it is now with DFP. Board Members were reminded that a workshop would take place on 30 March 2010 in Holywood Library to discuss the Strategic Outline Case.

Item 8 Audit and Risk Committee

5.2.12 It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee on 5 March 2010 had been adjourned when it became inquorate and that the meeting was being reconvened on 15 March at 1.30pm in Lisburn City Library.
5.2.13 The Chief Executive drew Members’ attention to the submission made to the Minister at the meeting with him on 26 February 2010.

Item 10 Management Statement and Financial Memorandum
5.2.14 Members noted that the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum had now been approved by DCAL and DFP and arrangements were being made to have the documents signed by the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Executive. Signed copies would be provided to all Board Members and would be posted on the website.

6. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2010

6.1 The Chairperson, Mr N Macartney, presented the minutes of the Services Committee held on 16 February 2010 for adoption and drew attention to the underlined items.

Item 6 Services to Looked after Children
6.1.1 Members noted the informative presentation and commended the work being done. In response to a question as to whether this service was still only available in the former NEELB area, the Director of Planning and Performance replied that this was still the case but as part of Libraries NI’s Learning Strategy it would be rolled out across Northern Ireland. It was noted that study clubs would be held during the Easter holidays in the following libraries:

- Lisburn City Library
- Bangor Carnegie Library
- Omagh Library
- Dungannon Library.

Item 7 All Our Saturdays and other Olympic Initiatives
6.1.2 Members sought clarification on the reason why the Belfast Giants and not other sporting organisations such as rugby, gaelic, cricket etc. were engaged with the All Our Saturdays programme. The Director of Service Delivery explained that the association had come about through meetings with the Belfast Telegraph. As a result contact had been made with the Belfast Giants who were keen to be involved in the project and were proactive in developing the year long partnership. Libraries NI had written to every official sporting organisation at Northern Ireland level and had invited them to the launch of the project.

6.1.3 Concern was expressed about recent publicity surrounding one of the players on the Belfast Giants team. Officers were urged to continue to contact other sporting organisations to ensure their involvement with the project. The Director of Service Delivery agreed to consider the comments made and report again to the Board.
Item 8 Learning Partnerships
6.1.4 Members noted the report and congratulated officers on the range and scope of the partnerships that had been developed.

Item 9 Draft Business Plan
6.1.5 Members noted the discussion on the draft Business Plan and that a workshop would be held after the Board meeting to progress this matter.

Item 10 Any Other Business
6.1.6 In response to a query on the reason why "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas" had been the most borrowed book in 2008/09, the Director of Service Delivery briefed Members on The One Book Project, an initiative across the 5 Education and Library Boards which encouraged everyone to read the book. The book had been chosen because it was accessible to both children and adults and there had also been a range of associated arts and writing projects. Members noted the value of such a project in encouraging reading and highlighting the important role of libraries in encouraging debate.

6.2 On a proposal by Mr N Macartney, seconded by Councillor S Cole, Members adopted the minutes of the Services Committee held on 16 February 2010.

7. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2010 LNI 04.03.10

7.1 The Chairperson, Councillor Mrs E Robinson, presented the minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 24 February 2010 for adoption.

7.2 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee said she would like to reiterate the views expressed by Members regarding staff in libraries and Members asked that it be noted in the minutes.

7.3 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee then drew attention to the following items:

Item 3 Chairperson's Business
7.3.1 Members noted the discussion on the scheme of self-regulation and scheme for payments of travel for Board Members and that proposals would be brought to the next meeting.

7.3.2 The Chairperson reminded Members that claims for expenses would not be paid without an appropriate receipt. Members were also reminded to submit travel claims as soon as possible before the end of the financial year.

7.3.3 The Director of Business Support informed Members that, as a result of comments made about the format of the expenses claims forms, a new
form was being developed and would be available from the beginning of the new financial year. In response to a question he indicated that at this stage it was not possible to provide for electronic submission of completed forms since forms needed to be signed by the claimant. However he agreed to investigate this matter further and report back to Members.

7.3.4 Item 6 Scheme for specifying duties and responsibilities of the Business Support Committee

The Chairperson drew attention to the proposed amendment in relation to the acceptance of tenders, as a result of comments received from DCAL.

7.3.5 Mr A McDowell, Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee stated that he would be unhappy from a governance perspective with the removal of this function from the Business Support Committee. He said that the authority or committee would be responsible in contractual terms for the tender and felt that this function should remain with the Business Support Committee. He asked that the Committee reconsider this matter. Members agreed to refer this matter back to the Committee for further consideration.

7.3.6 Item 7 Finance Report: Recurrent

Members noted Libraries NI’s contribution to the proposed fund for voluntary severance. Members noted also that work was ongoing with DCAL to formulate bids for the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

7.3.7 In response to a query regarding the proposed programme of voluntary redundancies, the Director of Business Support indicated that DFP approval of the Business Case was still awaited. It was noted however that an additional £412k had been allocated which could be used to fund the redundancies.

7.3.8 Item 7 Finance Report: Capital

The position regarding Lisnaskea Library was noted.

7.3.9 Item 8 DCAL Consultation on 2010/11 Budget

It was noted that DCAL had been asked to provide a copy of the impact assessment but a response was still awaited.

7.3.10 Item 9 Proposals for Fees and Charges

The recommendation to adopt the proposed policy was noted and it was agreed to implement this policy sensitively.

7.4 On a proposal by Councillor Mrs E Robinson, seconded by Mr R Dixon Members agreed to adopt the minutes of the meeting.
8. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

8.1 The Chief Executive introduced Mrs Helen Poston, Operations Manager, based at Antrim Library.

8.2 Mrs Poston briefed Members on the construction of Antrim Library and in particular the environmental features incorporated into the design of the building. She also informed Members of the improved facilities on offer to library users and of the interest that was being shown in the library by the community. It was noted that in the first month of operation approximately 500 new users had joined and the number of items issued was approximately 3 times greater than in the same period last year. Meeting rooms were being well-used also by a number of organisations in the town.

8.3 Members thanked and commended Ms Poston on her presentation and the staff in Antrim Library for their work.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9.1 Members noted that the next Board Meeting would take place on Thursday 29 April 2010 at 10.30 am in Newry City Library.

10. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

10.1 The meeting ended at 12.05 pm.

10.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended.

Signed: 

Date: 29/4/10