LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority
14 April 2011

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held on Thursday 14 April
2011 at 10.30 am in Lisburn City Library

PRESENT

Dr David Elliott
Alderman Hubert Nicholl
Mr Pat Carvill
Councillor Charlie Casey
Councillor Sam Cole
Mr Roger Dixon
Councillor Allan Ewart
Councillor Miss Carla Lockhart
Mr Nigel Macartney
Mr Alastair McDowell
Ms Angela Matthews
Councillor Cathal Mullaghan
Councillor Mrs Evelyne Robinson
Ms Helen Roulston
Councillor Seamus Shields
Ms Jane Williams

APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Councillor Mrs Anne Brolly
Councillor Mrs Roberta Dunlop
Councillor Jim Rodgers

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive
Director of Library Services
Director of Business Support
Organisational Development Manager
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ms Irene Knox
Ms Helen Osborn
Mr Terry Heron
Ms Pauline Martin
Mr David Polley

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. The Chairperson declared a potential conflict of interest relating to the ElfNI 2 Project and the Belfast
Central Library Project and indicated that he would withdraw at relevant stages during the meeting.

2. **CHAIRPERSON’S BUSINESS**

**Agenda**

2.1 The Chairman apologised for the long agenda. He stated that there were a number of important items that needed to be considered by the Board, including approval of the Annual Accounts and receipt of a number of deputations regarding the Stage 2 of the strategic review of library provision. He noted that the aim was to complete normal Board business by 1.00pm and to receive the first deputation at 1.30pm.

**Elections**

2.2 The Chairman referred to correspondence from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), dated 18 March 2011, regarding Councillor Members on the Board. He noted that the term of appointment of the Councillors would end on 5th May 2011, the date of the Council elections, and that re-appointment of elected Councillors would be a matter for the new Minister. He thanked all of the Councillors for their contribution to the work of the Board and their support for the public library service, expressing the view that the Board had operated very effectively and in a collaborative manner. He wished the Councillors well for the election and hoped that they would all be returned to the Board by the new Minister.

**Performance Reviews**

2.3 The Chairman advised that the Department had asked that the performance reviews of Councillors should be given priority and it was his intention, therefore, to email individual Councillors with a draft assessment report for consideration. He asked that they inform him as soon as possible if they were content with the assessment.

**Public Consultation Meetings**

2.4 The Chairman expressed his thanks to the Chief Executive, the Director of Library Services and all staff who were involved in the public consultation meetings. He expressed thanks also to Mr Macartney, Chairperson of Services Committee, who had attended the majority of meetings. He noted that the meetings had been well attended by members of the public and elected representatives and that useful and thoughtful contributions had been made by many people.
3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

Assembly Questions 4 February 2011 – 24 March 2011

3.1 Members noted the Minister’s response to Assembly Questions during the period 4 February 2011 – 24 March 2011.

Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee

3.2 The Chief Executive reported that the Chairperson, Director of Library Services and she had attended a meeting of the Culture, Arts and Leisure (CAL) Committee on 17 February 2011 to brief the Committee on Stage 2 of the strategic review of library services. She drew Members’ attention to a copy of the Hansard Report on the meeting together with a press release which had been issued afterwards by the CAL Committee. The Chief Executive also reported that the CAL Committee had received a deputation from St Mary’s Primary School, Draperstown about the proposal to close Draperstown Library, the first time that an Assembly Committee had received a deputation of children. Children from primary schools in Carnlough had also been invited to the Assembly to meet MLAs about the proposal to close Carnlough Library.

BBC Community Archive

3.3 The Chief Executive reported that the “Our Place” project, a joint initiative between Libraries NI and BBC Northern Ireland, had been launched in Lurgan Library on 24 February 2011. She explained that the aim of the project was to make the BBC’s programme archive more accessible to local communities and each of the libraries involved in the project (Antrim, Derry Central, Lurgan and Newry) had a dedicated computer terminal where BBC archive recordings about people, places and personalities in the local area could be accessed by the public.

In response to a question, the Director of Library Services advised that it was intended that the project should be rolled out to other libraries, but that progress would be dependent on the availability of resources, not least in the BBC, which had only one member of staff assigned to work on the archive.

Celebration of completion of Belfast Central Library Stonework Project

3.4 The Chief Executive advised Members that the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure visited Belfast Central Library on 2 March 2011 to celebrate the completion of the stonework repair project carried out to the façade of the building which cost over £900,000.

Members commended the work that had been carried out which had transformed the outside of the listed building and expressed the hope that funding would be obtained to enable the interior to be refurbished to a similar standard.
3.5 Carrickfergus Library: Preview
The Chief Executive advised Members that the newly-refurbished Carrickfergus Library had been completed ahead of schedule and opened to the public on 11 March 2011. She advised that a preview event had been held on 10 March for invited guests, including the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the local MP and MLAs, the Mayor and regular users.

3.6 Heritage Gallery: Downpatrick Library
The Chief Executive reported that Dr Maurice Hayes had carried out the official opening of the new Heritage Gallery in Downpatrick Library on 14 March 2011. The Heritage Gallery housed the Co Down Local Studies Collection, previously located in the former SEELB Library Headquarters in Ballynahinch. It was noted that there was increased use of the Local Studies Collection since the move to Downpatrick.

3.7 Budget 2011 – 2015
The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to correspondence from the Minister acknowledging receipt of the Libraries NI response to the Draft Budget 2011 – 15.

3.8 Councillor Members
On behalf of officers, the Chief Executive thanked Councillors for their support and commitment to Libraries NI since their appointment to the Board and wished them well in the elections.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2011

4.1 On a proposal by Mr R Dixon, seconded by Councillor A Ewart, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2011 were adopted.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2011

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

Item 2.3: Meeting with DCAL Minister – 24 January 2011
5.2 The Chief Executive advised Members that a proforma bid had been submitted for funding to assist with redundancies which might arise as a result of implementation of the Savings Delivery Plans and reported that the bid had been unsuccessful.

Item 2.5: Stage 2 Public Consultation
5.3 The Chief Executive reported that the public consultation closed on 8 April 2011. Eleven public meetings had been held during the
consultation phase and that there had also been meetings with local councils, MLAs, representatives of the campaign groups and other interested parties. Work was now ongoing to collate responses to the consultation process.

Item 5.6: Vandalism

5.4 The Chief Executive drew Members’ attention to a report on the vandalism incident at Ballymena Regional Administrative Centre and advised that the fencing work at the Centre had now been completed.

On a proposal by Mr A McDowell, seconded by Ms H Roulston, Members agreed that the Chief Executive should write to the District Commander seeking an update.

Item 5.8: Gifts and Hospitality: Guidance for Board Members

5.5 The Chief Executive reminded Board Members, who had not already done so, that Gifts and Hospitality Registers for the period January – March 2011 should be completed, signed and returned as soon as possible, even if it reflected a nil return.

Item 5.9.4: Management of Conflicts of Interest

5.6 The Chief Executive advised Members that the Audit and Risk Committee, at its meeting on 23 March 2011, had agreed the Terms of Reference for the review. She agreed to circulate a copy of the Terms of Reference to all Board Members for information.

Item 13: Any Other Notified Business

5.7 On a proposal by the Vice Chairperson, Alderman H Nicholl, seconded by Councillor S Shields, Members agreed that the Chief Executive should write to Mrs Anne Connolly, on behalf of the Board, expressing thanks for the significant contribution that she had made to Libraries NI and wishing her well in retirement.

6. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 MARCH 2011 (LNI 03.04.11)

6.1 Mr Nigel Macartney, Chairperson of the Services Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2011 for approval and drew Members’ attention to the undernoted items.

Item 7: Centre for Migration Studies

6.2 Having considered a paper on the role of the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS), the Committee recommended approval for CMS to be confirmed as part of the Libraries NI network of services.

Item 8: Publication Scheme

6.3 Following consideration Members agreed to adopt the Model Publication Scheme for Non-Departmental Public Bodies.
6.4 The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee had considered a progress report on the 2010/11 Business Plan as at the end of the third quarter. Members noted also the discussion regarding the impact of the Budget 2010 process on planned targets in 2010/11.

6.5 Members noted that the Volunteer Policy had been approved by the Committee, subject to consultation with trades unions.

6.6 On a proposal by Ms J Williams, seconded by Councillor S Shields, Members agreed to adopt the minutes of the Services Committee meeting held on 15 March 2011.

7. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 23 MARCH 2011 (LNI 04.04.11)

7.1 Mr A McDowell, Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2011 for approval and drew attention to the undernoted items.

7.2 Members noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would monitor progress on the completion of Post-Project Evaluations.

7.3 The Chairperson reported that a Project Team was being set up to address a range of matters associated with the Fine, Rare and Valuable Books collection. He also advised that the Audit and Risk Committee would continue to monitor progress on this matter.

7.4 In response to questions, the Chief Executive advised that:
- in the Report to Those Charged with Governance, the NIAO had identified a legacy issue from the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) regarding the lack of a consistent policy across the ELBs for the valuation of Rare Books and that the Project Team would consider a number of issues in relation to this matter, including the definition of a Rare or Valuable Book and appropriate storage arrangements for these items; and
- it was not the intention to centralise the collection of Fine, Rare and Valuable books inherited from the ELBs in a single location.

7.5 Members noted that 5 Internal Audit Reports had been completed since the last meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee, all of which provided a satisfactory level of assurance.
Item 10: Libraries NI Sponsorship Risk Assessment
7.6 The Chairperson reported that the overall risk rating of Medium/Low assigned to Libraries NI was welcome and noted the changes to sponsorship arrangements implemented by DCAL as a result.

Item 13: Directorate Risk Register – Service Delivery
7.7 Members noted the presentation given to the Committee by the Director of Library Services in relation to the major risks within her Directorate and the action being taken to mitigate them.

Item 14: Internal Audit Plan Strategy 2011/14
7.8 The Chairperson advised Members that, further to consultation with DCAL and after noting the main risks, the Strategy had been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Item 15: Internal Audit Plan 2011/12
7.9 The Chairperson advised Members that the Internal Audit Plan 2011/12 had been approved by the Committee and that a proposed timetable for each audit would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for information.

Item 16: Internal Audit Strategy for Branch Libraries
7.10 Members noted that aim of the Strategy, which had been approved by the Committee, was to carry out an audit of between 18 and 20 Branch Libraries each year so that each library would be audited at least once every 5 years.

Item 20: Northern Ireland Audit Office Issues
7.11 The Chairperson reported that the main focus of discussion with Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) representatives had been the draft Report to Those Charged with Governance and it had been agreed to consider its contents further at special Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 4 April 2011.

7.12 On a proposal by Mr A McDowell, seconded by Ms H Roulston, Members agreed to adopt the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 23 March 2011.

8. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 APRIL 2011 (LNI 05.04.11)

8.1 Mr A McDowell, Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2011 for approval and drew attention to the following items:

Item 3: Presentation of Annual Accounts 2009/10
8.2 Mr A McDowell advised Members that Mr T Heron, Director of Business Support, had presented the Annual Accounts to the Audit and Risk Committee and had answered Members’ questions.
Item 4: Report to Those Charged with Governance

8.3 Members noted that the NIAO had presented its Report which included draft management responses. The Chairperson reported that progress on implementing the management responses would be monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Item 5: Statement on Internal Control 2009/10

8.4 The Chairperson informed Members that the final draft of the Statement on Internal Control had been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee.

Item 6: Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2009/10

8.5 The Chairperson reported that the Committee's Annual Report had been reviewed in light of the Report to Those Charged with Governance and had been approved by the Committee. He noted also that the Committee had met with the NIAO representatives and that no issues had been raised by them that were not included in their Report.

8.6 On a proposal by Mr A McDowell, seconded by Ms H Roulston, Members agreed to adopt the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 4 April 2011.

9. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 MARCH 2011

(LNI 06.04.11)

9.1 Councillor Mrs E Robinson, Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2011 for approval and drew attention to the undernoted items.

Item 6: Annual Accounts

9.2 Members noted that the Committee had received a presentation on the Annual Accounts 2009/10 from the Director of Business Support and the Finance Manager. It was noted also that the Director of Business Support would make a similar presentation to Board Members under Item 11 of the agenda for this meeting. The Chairperson expressed thanks to the Director and his staff for the significant work that had been undertaken to bring the Accounts to this stage.

9.3 In response to a question regarding performance related pay for senior staff, the Chief Executive advised that a Pay Remit Business Case, in accordance with the Scheme that operated in the ELBS, had been submitted to DCAL in relation to performance in the 2008/09 year prior to the establishment of Libraries NI. DCAL had forwarded the Pay Remit to DFP for consideration and discussions were ongoing in relation to additional information that was required. She further stated that in line with a directive from DFP no payments relating to performance were being made for the 2009/10 or 2010/11 years.
Item 7: Financial Reports
9.4 Members noted a projected underspend of £161k in recurrent funding at year end and an underspend also in capital funding at year end.

Item 8: Budget 2010
9.5 Members noted that the final budget allocation letter received from DCAL showed additional funding of £2.5 million capital and £2.88 million recurrent over the four year period compared to the draft budget and that DCAL had established a target of a minimum spend of £1.8 million per year on stock.

Item 9: Procurement Report
9.6 Members noted the requirement for an annual report to DCAL on all Single Tender Actions and that all Single Tender Actions, regardless of value were approved by the Chief Executive.

9.7 In response to questions regarding the Single Tender Action for e-books, the Director of Service Delivery advised that:
- the e-books market was still very limited and only one library supplier provided the range of materials required that could be downloaded to a number of devices
- consideration would be given to the benefits of making downloadable talking books, film and music available.

Item 11: Assets Policies
9.8 Members noted that the Committee had approved the Environmental Policy, the Health and Safety Policy and the Smoke Free Workplace policy.

Item 12: Human Resource Policies / Procedures
9.9 Members noted that the Harassment and Equal Opportunities Policies and the Discipline and Grievance Procedures had been approved by the Committee

Item 13: Finance Policy
9.10 Members noted that the Travel and Subsistence Policy had been approved by the Committee, subject to ongoing consultation with trades unions regarding the definition of an essential user.

Item 14: IT Policy
9.11 Members noted the Internet and Email policy which had been approved by the Committee.

9.12 On a proposal by Councillor Mrs E Robinson, seconded by Councillor C Mullaghan, Members agreed to adopt the minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 30 March 2011.
10. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2009/10

Annual Report and Accounts (LNI 07.04.11)

10.1 The Chief Executive presented the Annual Report and Accounts 2009/10. She advised Members that an early draft of the Annual Report had been reviewed by the Services Committee and there had been minor changes to the Director’s Report and the Management Commentary. She drew attention in particular to the additional sections, including the Remuneration Report, the Statement on Internal Control, the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Northern Ireland Library Authority. She indicated that the Management Commentary reflected the significant amount of work that had been undertaken within Libraries NI during its first year and expressed her thanks to all staff for their contribution. She also acknowledged the work undertaken by the Finance Section in preparing the first set of Annual Accounts for Libraries NI.

10.2 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee referred to the Statement on Internal Control and advised that it had been reviewed at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 4 April. He advised Members also that the Certificate and Report of the Comptroller & Auditor General to the Northern Ireland Assembly was included as Annex B of the NIAO Report to Those Charged with Governance, which had also been discussed at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 4 April.

10.3 The Director of Business Support presented the Annual Accounts, including the Accounting Policy and Notes to the Accounts. He explained that comparative information for 2008-09 had been obtained from the five ELBs, indicating that the co-ordination of the process and the consistency of information obtained had been problematic. He referred to the limitation of scope qualifications resulting from the legacy issues and indicated that the Pension Deficit and VAT Debtor issues would not be an issue in future years. He noted also the project that had been established to address the issues associated with Fine and Valuable books and indicated that it could take several years to resolve this matter. Members noted in particular Note 34 to the Annual Accounts which reconciled the final position with the monitoring reports received regularly by the Business Support Committee and the Board and showed the underspend at year end of £94k in recurrent funding and £119k in capital funding.

10.4 In response to questions the Director of Business Support advised that:
• the deficit on the pension scheme would materialise only if Libraries NI were to leave the scheme and that NILGOSC was increasing the contribution rates on an annual basis in order to address the deficit issue
there was a substantial cost associated with the valuation exercise required for the Fine and Valuable books and that it would be important, before commencing that exercise, to ensure clarity in relation to what should be included. It was noted that one of the first tasks of the project team would be to clarify the accounting policy relevant to this matter. The Chairperson of Audit and Risk felt that there would be merit in producing a Project Initiation Document setting out the various stages in the work required with key milestones identified, given that the NIAO had indicated the importance of progress being evident.

Report to Those Charged with Governance (LNI 08.04.11)

10.5 The Chairperson of Audit and Risk Committee advised Members that the above report had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 30 March 2011 and that minor amendments and the management response had been incorporated before being reviewed again by the Committee at its meeting on 4 April 2011.

Audit and Risk Committee’s Annual Report 2009/10 (LNI 09.04.11)

10.6 The Chairperson of Audit and Risk Committee advised Members that the above report had been finalised by the Committee, having taken into account the Report to Those Charged with Governance, and had been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 4 April 2011. He referred, in particular, to Section 9.2 which dealt with the limitation of scope issues and other matters raised by the NIAO in the Report to Those Charged with Governance, indicating that the Audit and Risk Committee would keep under review the actions being taken to address the issues identified. He referred also to Section 11.0 which dealt with the issue of the Chairperson’s declared conflict of interest and his Gifts and Hospitality Register, indicating that the NIAO had made recommendations in relation to this matter and that he had briefed the Chairperson accordingly.

10.7 The Chairperson of Audit and Risk Committee expressed his thanks to the Head of Internal Audit for the work undertaken by Internal Audit during the year which had contributed to the ability of the Audit and Risk Committee to provide the Accounting Officer with a satisfactory level of assurance in relation to the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management process and other internal control arrangements. He expressed gratitude also for the support which the Head of Internal Audit had provided to the operation of the Audit and Risk Committee.

10.8 On a proposal by Alderman H Nicholl, seconded by Mr P Carvill, Members agreed to approve the Annual Accounts and authorise the Chairperson and Chief Executive to sign them.
11. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 MARCH 2011 (LNI 10.04.11)

11.1 The Chairperson of the Board declared an interest in this matter and withdrew from the meeting. The Vice Chairperson of the Board assumed the chair.

11.2 On a proposal by Councillor C Mullagahan, seconded by Councillor Mrs E Robinson the Board went into committee.

11.3 On a proposal by Councillor C Mullagahan, seconded by Councillor Mrs E Robinson, the Board came out of committee.

11.4 The Chairperson returned to the meeting and resumed the chair. The Vice Chairperson reported that while, in committee, the Board:

- had received a report from the Chairperson of the Information Systems Committee on the meeting of the Committee held on 30 March 2011 and had approved the minutes of the meeting
- had agreed that minutes of the Committee should be designated as Privileged and Confidential and should continue to be considered in committee and with the Chairperson having withdrawn from the meeting
- had agreed that, in future, issues associated with the management of the conflict of interest should be considered separately from the review of the ElfNI replacement project and normally with the Chairperson present
- had noted the work being undertaken to review the processes in place to manage the declared conflict of interest.

12 CORPORATE PLAN 2011 – 2015 (LNI 11.04.11)

12.1 The Chief Executive advised Members that Libraries NI was required to submit a draft Corporate Plan to DCAL within 1 month of receiving financial planning figures. The first Corporate Plan 2009 – 2011 had covered a 2 year period in order to bring Libraries NI into line with the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) timetable. The new draft Corporate Plan covered the 4 year period of the current CSR and was in a similar format to the previous one, with high level priorities established from a review of a number of sources, including DCAL’s objectives and priorities, Libraries NI’s own systems and consultations, the work needed to establish fully optimal systems for the operation of Libraries NI as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) and the need to continue to implement improvements. Member noted that it might be necessary to revise the Corporate and Business Plan when a new Programme for Government had been agreed.

12.2 The Chief Executive drew attention to the four key objectives established for the planning period and indicated that, while achieving
these objectives in the current financial climate would be difficult, nevertheless it was important to have high aspirations and set challenging targets.

12.2 Members considered the draft Corporate Plan, noting that it was subject to the approval of the Department and the new Minister and that a further review would need to take place, following receipt of any feedback from DCAL. The Chairperson indicated his attention to allow for further consideration of the Corporate and Business Plan at the next meeting and on a proposal by Mr Macartney, seconded by Councillor S Cole Members approved the draft Corporate Plan for submission to the Department.

13. BUSINESS PLAN 2011 – 2012 (LNI 12.04.11)

13.1 The Chief Executive advised Members that the draft Business Plan 2011-2012 was required to be submitted at the same time as the draft Corporate Plan and advised that it would remain a draft plan until approved by the Minister. She drew attention to the targets that had been established and indicated that the actions to achieve these targets would be reflected in more detail in Service Plans which would be considered by the relevant Committees.

13.2 In response to questions and comments from Members the Chief Executive indicated that:

- consideration would be given to inclusion of more detail about the role that public libraries played in addressing social problems
- the Department had set a minimum target of £1.8 million per year spend on stock which equated to approximately £1 per head of population and that while in Year 1 we proposed to spend £1.40 per head of population, this level of spend was unlikely to be sustainable in future years
- in making decisions on Stage 2 of the strategic review the implications for achieving targets for increased membership and usage in future years would need to be considered carefully
- a statistician had been seconded to Libraries NI from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to assist in the collation and analysis of management information to enable progress in achieving the targets to be carefully monitored.

13.5 On a proposal by Ms H Roulston, seconded by Mr R Dixon, Members approved the draft Business Plan for submission to the Department.

14. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (LNI 13.04.11)

14.1 The Chief Executive advised Members that the Corporate Risk Register was linked to the Corporate Plan, and although it included
the new objectives contained in the Corporate Plan, many of the risks remained similar to those in the previous Corporate Risk Register. She advised that the principal risks related to the implications of the budget cuts arising from the CSR settlement and the implementation of the Savings Delivery Plans. She advised that the Corporate Risk Register had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee but that it was important that the all Board Members were aware of, and took ownership of the risks and the actions being taken to mitigate them.

14.2 Members noted the Corporate Risk Register.

15. DELEGATIONS IN RESPECT OF PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LIBRARIES

15.1 The Chief Executive referred to Standing Orders and noted that the delegations had been informed that they would have 10 minutes to make their presentation to the Board followed by a maximum of 10 minutes for questions for clarification purposes only.

15.2 The Chief Executive advised Members that Carnlough Library Action Group had decided not to attend today’s meeting and had asked instead for their deputation to be received at a future meeting.

15.3 Each of the delegations was received in turn and was reminded that they were being received in accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders. Each delegation made a presentation to the Board and answered questions from Members. The composition of the delegations and a summary of key points made are shown in the following paragraphs.

Killyleagh Library

15.3 The delegation from Killyleagh Action Committee comprised Mr Alan Bucknall, Mrs Joanne McCrum and Mr Clive Scoular. The delegation provided Members with a paper, entitled “The Way Forward for Killyleagh Library”.

Key points included the following:
- the Action Committee had worked tirelessly to change the minds of the Libraries NI Board
- the Committee had received support from a number of well-known and influential people, including the first Minister, the local MP and MLAs and local Councillors
- the campaign to save the library had received extensive coverage in the local newspapers
- the campaign’s Facebook page and Twitter account had many followers
- there had been street parties, a procession through the village and a “Big Borrow”
• the library was used by the people of Kilyleagh and neighbouring areas who were shocked and dismayed by the proposal to close it
• hundreds of letters of support for the library from local schoolchildren and other users had been provided to the Chief Executive and Chairperson
• the statistical information being used by Libraries NI was flawed with many libraries being retained having fewer active borrowers, less use made of the computers, less issues and costing more to run than Kilyleagh Library and therefore the business case did not stack up
• the vision of Libraries NI and the criteria being used to assess Kilyleagh Library were not relevant to a small rural community
• the proposal to close the library seemed to be centred on the condition of the building and the fact that Libraries NI could not invest in it because it was owned by South East Regional College (SERC)
• SERC wished to dispose of the building and the group suggested that since both it and Libraries NI were public sector organisations this should be a paper transaction if there was the will to do it
• since the main costs in running the library seemed to be those associated with staffing, the use of volunteers should be considered
• a Committee of local people could be established which could register as a charity and assist with stimulating interest in the library, generating revenue through helping to arrange events in the library and consulting on the most appropriate opening hours.
• a Committee comprising local people would reinforce the link between government, Libraries NI and the local community
• this Committee could also assist with revenue generation
• the estimates provided by Libraries NI for installation of disabled access were excessive according to a Quantity Surveyor whom the Action Committee had consulted
• Down District Council was willing to consider sharing the cost of providing public toilet facilities
• The possibility of a developer buying the building, refurbishing it and leasing it back to Libraries NI had been suggested
• A full renovation of the building could include the top floor thus nearly doubling the floor space and opening up the possibility of generating more revenue and bringing in more visitors
• the alternative being suggested of mobile library provision was not a suitable substitute for a library building
• the community was not prepared to take the threat of closure lying down as the library was a cherished place, as had been evidenced by the attendance at the public meeting.
The Chairperson thanked the delegation for attending and they withdrew from the meeting.

Kells and Connor Library

The delegation from the campaign group for Kells and Connor Library comprised Mrs Marianne Buick, Mr John McKee and Mr Robin Swann. The delegation provided the Board with fragments of a photograph of children using the library for storytime.

Key points included the following:

- Ms M Buick began by quoting a library assistant as follows: "My job makes lives better. Libraries are really important places for people because they are for everyone regardless of background, wealth or age. They are gateways to knowledge and I get a great deal of satisfaction helping the public get the most out of the services we offer, whether it is rhyme time for the under fives, help for students with their studies or advice on reading for pleasure for all ages".
- the delegation was representative of the residents of Kells and Connor and was therefore the voice of the local community
- they had not come to the Board meeting to make a presentation about facts and figures but with a clear message from the residents of Kells and Connor, from the youngest child to the oldest senior citizen that the Board should reconsider its proposal
- they understood that cuts in many services were being implemented because of the financial situation but in a time of recession libraries were even more crucial to maintaining the quality of life and learning opportunities for families who could not afford books or a home computer and the library provided people with access to the information and resources that they needed
- if the library closed an important resource would be removed from their community that was used by children, young people, senior citizens and the unemployed who would have nowhere to go
- the group queried what would happen to the building if the library closed
- there was evidence to show that library usage across the UK was increasing and Northern Ireland was set to follow this trend
- the consultation was low profile, Libraries NI had not adequately communicated its proposal to close the library and the majority of the community was unaware of the possibility
- the EQIA had not been registered with the Equality Commission
- the attendance figures at the public meeting published on the Libraries NI website were considered to be inaccurate
- there was poor public transport between Kells and Connor and Ballymena, the nearest alternative library and public transport was costly
• parking at Ballymena Library was a problem
• the library served a large hinterland
• there was an active community association in the area which wanted to work with Libraries NI to develop and improve the resource.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for attending and they withdrew from the meeting.

Fintona Library

15.5 The delegation from the Fintona Library Campaign Group comprised Mr John O'Neill, Mr Kieran Cranny and Rev Paul Johnston. The delegation presented the Board with 2 papers, namely, "Fintona Library Campaign Submission to Libraries NI" and "A Partnership Option".

Key points included the following:
• while the Group felt that Fintona had been unfairly treated in the assessment process, they wished to be solution focused and consider how things could be done differently and better
• opportunities existed to make the library better in the rural setting through community and statutory organisations working together in partnership
• precedence existed for such partnerships e.g. Fresh Horizons Ltd in Huddersfield, Lambeth Old Library, Torrent Centre
• the aims of the partnership would be to:
  - provide a modern library and learning space which meets the Libraries NI vision and the aspirations of the community for an integrated community services hub
  - pilot an innovative and sustainable model of rural service provision
  - increase the number of active library users
  - reduce the financial burden on Libraries NI
  - create volunteer and personal development opportunities
  - contribute to the renewal of disadvantaged rural community
• the Group, which was pragmatic, realistic and had good local knowledge and links (e.g. with schools) could bring a range of competencies to the partnership
• there were at least 4 space options available in the village that could be considered, including the current library building
• by 2014 100% of property costs could be removed from Libraries NI by making it a community funded building.
• time was required to put in place the necessary arrangements - Libraries NI should focus on taking time to do it right
• Libraries NI needed to consider whether this review was about service improvement or cutting costs i.e. people centred or cost centred
• this project could demonstrate Libraries NI's commitment to the concept of joined-up government and tackling TSN
Fintona was a priority village in the Omagh area for investment in relation to rural development monies because it was seen as an area of social need.

The 2001 census showed that 66% of the residents of Fintona had no educational qualifications (10% higher than the average across Northern Ireland).

The people who used the computers in Fintona Library would not be able to travel to Omagh.

While some people from Omagh may use Fintona Library, many would not do so and the Group's strategy met the needs of the local community.

The Group can guarantee that the proposed partnership will deliver and be sustainable.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for attending and they withdrew from the meeting.

Gilford Library

The delegation from the Save Gilford Library Campaign Group comprised Ms Sarah McNeill, Mr Jonathan Higgins and Dr Robert Logan. The Group had provided a copy of their paper in advance of the meeting and this had been circulated to Board Members.

Key points included the following:

- The needs of the Gilford community needed to be considered in terms of its history which was inextricably linked with the Mill.
- The impact of the closure of the Mill was still being felt in the village which displays many of the characteristics of an inner city region in a rural setting in terms of socio-economic conditions with high unemployment and excess housing stock which was sold off to developers by the Mill owners, much of which was now derelict.
- The community had floundered over the years since the closure of the Mill and it was only very recently that people were coming together to try to improve the situation in the village.
- The Department of Social Development had identified Gilford as an "Area at Risk" i.e. one that is at risk of slipping into a spiral of decline and where the loss of services would have a significant negative impact on the local community.
- The library is seen as a hub in the community and the library service has a role to play in terms of the regeneration of the village and in helping families to exit the cycle of deprivation.
- A large number of children and families in the area have no access to the internet except in the library.
- The library is a bright, safe and neutral venue, that is highly accessible; the grounds are well-maintained and are used every year as the site for the village's Christmas tree.
- Closing the library and providing a mobile library would deprive the village of the physical resource provided by the library.
building and cause further isolation for residents, as well as having a negative impact on the physical environment by adding to the already high number of derelict buildings on the main street

- the community recognises that usage was low and feels guilty that the facility is taken for granted; it believes also, however, that Libraries NI and its predecessor have not done enough to promote the library and some of the events that would have been held in the library in the past have ceased
- the Group would dispute some of the scores awarded by Libraries NI in terms of the suitability of the building
- the new Community Centre currently being built is largely a Sports Hall and is not seen as a practical option for a library
- the Group wants to work with Libraries NI to promote library usage and Sarah McNeill, a community worker employed Gilford under the Areas at Risk Programme would assist
- give the Group time (at least 6 months) to prove that library usage can be increased
- the library could become a centre of excellence for historical information associated with the linen industry and the Mill
- some people from Gilford would use Portadown Library but the cost of bus fares was prohibitive and there was only one bus per day to Tandragee.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for attending and they withdrew from the meeting.

Moy Library

15.7 The delegation from the Save Moy Library Committee comprised Mr Michael Fegan, Ms Cathy Doherty and Ms Máire Coulter.

Key points included the following:

- in relation to criteria used by Libraries NI to make its assessment of Moy Library, the Committee is of the view that:
  - it is fit for purpose in that it meets the needs of the local community; the property, while small, is in good condition with a maintenance backlog that is 14th lowest of all libraries; and floor space could be doubled if the offer made by Dungannon Council of access to the first floor and the provision of a lift at no cost was accepted
  - it delivers the vision since it is a dynamic focal point for the community; it meets their expectations and is attractive and welcoming
  - it is accessible for the majority of the population in the area; alternative libraries in Dungannon (5 miles) and Armagh (7 miles) were not accessible; bus fares are expensive; and it was a 20 minute walk from the bus station n Armagh uphill to the library
- it is one of the only venues in the community which offers truly neutral space; it is a safe environment for children and the elderly and there is easy parking
- the local community was keen to explore partnership working with Libraries NI
- the library provided an important service for the large ethnic minority population living in the area, particularly from Eastern European countries which had increased substantially over the last 10 years – nearly one third of the pupils at one primary school are from an Eastern European background
- Libraries NI had been slow in providing copies of the questionnaire in other languages
- a number of new housing developments are taking place in Moy and for the first time in many years, a local primary school and the local Playgroup are oversubscribed
- the library is not well promoted or signposted
- costs per issue are in the mid-range for libraries; issues activity has increased and will continue to increase with better promotion and enhanced services
- PC usage is not in the bottom "10"
- local schools valued and used the facility
- the Campaign Committee had the support of the local Council and local political representatives from all parties
- second level students from Moy would use Dungannon Library because they went to school there but lack of bus services meant that they could not avail of late night opening
- parking in Dungannon was a problem and bus fares were expensive; rather than have to travel to Dungannon or Armagh, people would simply not use a library
- the relevance of the statistics used in the draft EQIA report was questioned since there had been substantial changes to the demography of the village since 2001
- the library is valued by the entire local community and if it closed it would be the vulnerable and disadvantaged who would be worse affected.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for attending and they withdrew from the meeting.

15.8 Following receipt of the delegations Members discussed the decision-making process in relation to the strategic review. It was agreed, because of the disruption caused to the Board by the election process and the need to ensure that all Board Members had time to consider the information fully, to postpone the decision-making process until September. The Chief Executive agreed to inform all the campaign groups accordingly.
16. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

16.1 The Chief Executive advised Members of the impact of the ending of the term of appointment of Councillors on the operation of Committees during May. Members agreed that instead of separate meetings of the Services Committee and the Business Support Committee in May, a full Board meeting should be held. The Chief Executive agreed to check availability for a Board meeting on 25 May 2011. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would meet as previously scheduled.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17.1 Members noted that the Chief Executive's office would be in contact to check availability for the next Board meeting to take place on Wednesday 25 May 2011.

18. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

18.1 The meeting ended at 4.00pm.

18.2 All Members arrived for the commencement of the meeting and remained until it ended with the exception of the following:

Ms Angela Matthews left at 1:30 pm
Councillor Charlie Casey left at 1:30 pm
Mr Roger Dixon left at 1:30 pm
Councillor Cathal Mullaghan left at 1:30 pm
Councillor Mrs Evelyne Robinson left at 3:00 pm

Signed:

Date: 7 July 11