LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority
13 September 2012
Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held on Thursday 13 September 2012 at 10.30 am in Antrim Library

PRESENT
Mr Nigel Macartney  Chairperson
Councillor Mrs Anne Brolly
Mr Pat Carvill
Councillor Charlie Casey
Mr Roger Dixon
Mr Alastair McDowell
Ms Angela Matthews
Councillor Mrs Evelyne Robinson
Councillor Jim Rodgers
Ms Helen Roulston
Ms Jane Williams

APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE
Councillor Hubert Nicholl  Vice-Chairperson
Councillor Sam Cole
Councillor Allan Ewart
Councillor John O’Kane
Councillor Mrs Marion Smith

Mr Mick Cory  Director of Sport, Museums and Recreation, DCAL
Mr Alastair Hughes  Head of Museums and Libraries, DCAL

IN ATTENDANCE
Ms Irene Knox  Chief Executive
Mr Terry Heron  Director of Business Support
Ms Helen Osborn  Director of Library Services
Mr Glenn Beattie  Head of Marketing and Communications

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 interests were declared.
2. CHAIRPERSON’S BUSINESS

2.1 The Chairperson referred to the death, since the last Board meeting, of Councillor Seamus Shields. He paid tribute to Councillor Shield’s determination to attend Board and Committee meetings despite his illness and the tremendous contribution he had made, not only to the work of Libraries NI, but to his community.

Councillor Mrs Robinson asked to be associated with the Chairperson’s remarks, commenting, in particular, on Councillor Shield’s courteous and friendly manner and his in-depth knowledge of a wide range of matters. She referred also to the very large attendance at his funeral, which was evidence of the respect in which he had been held by so many people and commented on the beautiful setting in which he had been laid to rest.

Councillor Mrs Brolly added that she had found Councillor Shields to be truly inspirational person and that he would be missed by very many people to whom he had provided help and assistance over many years.

As a mark of respect Members and officers stood for a minute’s silence.

2.2 The Chairperson reminded members that one vacancy had existed on the Board of Libraries NI since his appointment as Chairperson but the untimely death of Councillor Shields had resulted in another vacancy. He reported that the Chief Executive had sought clarification from DCAL on the process and timescale for filling the vacancies. In an email response DCAL had indicated that consideration was currently being given to this matter and it was expected that a new councillor member would be appointed in due course from a reserve list created following the last recruitment process for councillors. It was further noted that no decision had been made yet about the process to fill vacancies which would result in 2013 when the term of office of non-councillor members came to an end.

2.3 It was agreed that Agenda Item 10: Minutes of the Information Systems Committee would be taken before Agenda Item 7: Management Report.

3. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS

Assembly Questions

3.1 The Chief Executive drew Members’ attention to the Assembly Questions received and the Minister’s response given during the period 29 June – 31 August 2012.

2011 – 15 Corporate Plan

3.2 Members noted correspondence received from the DCAL Minister, dated 22 August 2012, approving the Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2011- 15.
New Mobile Libraries

3.3 Members noted that 4 new mobile libraries bought in 2011/12 were now operational. One of the mobiles was available for Members to view before the start of the Board Meeting. It was noted that the new mobiles were more reliable, had reduced running costs and better facilities for staff.

Mobile Library Service Strategy

3.4 The Director of Library Services informed Members that the public consultation process on the Mobile Library Service Strategy would commence on 24 September and continue until 14 December 2012. She reminded Members of the purpose of the consultation, indicating that views were being sought on 5 proposals, which related to the following matters:

• targeting specifically the primary users of the service i.e. older, retired people and children of various age groups and their carers
• concentrating mainly on delivering book lending services and not providing Internet access
• establishing criteria for stops in order to provide an equitable service.
• extending the service, where capacity allowed, to stops at schools and playgroups to complement the Schools Library Service
• promotion of the service to increase usage.

Members noted that a full report on the results of the consultation would be brought to the Board, via the Services Committee, in the New Year.

Carnegie UK Trust

3.5 The Chief Executive reported that Liz Macdonald, Senior Policy Officer and Jennie Brotchie, Policy Officer, Carnegie UK Trust had visited N Ireland in August and met with senior staff from Libraries NI and DCAL to discuss the recently published report, A New Chapter and to visit a number of libraries.

Relocation

3.6 Members noted that the Chief Executive’s Department, Assets Department and Marketing Unit were now located in Lisburn City Library.

Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries

3.7 The Chief Executive referred Members to the briefing note prepared by DCAL in relation to its review of Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries. Members noted that senior staff from Libraries NI had met with DCAL officials in August to discuss the review and would be actively engaged throughout the process. DCAL recognised that the Board of Libraries NI had an important contribution to make to the review and would be consulting with the Board and other stakeholders.

3.8 Mr McDowell queried whether officers were content that DCAL was involving Libraries NI sufficiently in the review and whether a working group to include officers and Members of Libraries NI might be a more appropriate way to take forward the review process. The Chief Executive indicated that Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries was DCAL’s policy framework, within which Libraries NI must operate, and responsibility for the review rested primarily
with the Department. It was her view, however, that DCAL recognised fully the importance of Libraries NI’s involvement in the review process. It was obvious from the meeting in August that DCAL recognised that the policy framework required, at least, to be updated to take account of the changes that had taken place and were continuing to take place in the way that people used the public library service and of the impact, in particular, of new technologies. Moreover the recent consultations carried out by Libraries NI had generated considerable feedback from the general public about the important role that libraries played in communities, not just as a source of books, but as community hubs and this needed to be reflected in any revised or new policy.

3.9 Members noted the review of Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries and indicated their wish to be consulted fully during, and to have an opportunity to input to, the process.

Declaration of Interests

3.10 The Chief Executive asked Members to complete the Declaration of Interests forms and return them to her as soon as possible.

Bigger and McDonald Calendar 2013

3.11 Members noted the calendar which had been produced to celebrate Derry-Londonderry City of Culture status in 2013 and which was now on sale in libraries. A copy was made available for each Member.

Elements Exhibition

3.12 Members noted that Belfast Central Library was the venue for the Department of Finance and Personnel/Office of Public Works annual joint art exhibition. The exhibition entitled “Elements” was opened on 6 September 2012 by Stephen Peover, Permanent Secretary (DFP) and Claire McGrath, Chairperson (OPW).

Staff Conferences

3.13 The Chief Executive reported that a number of staff conferences would be held in October to ensure that all staff in Libraries NI were aware of the key priorities for the service and in particular the changes that would be taking place as a result of the implementation of E2. To facilitate attendance it would be necessary to close libraries for a day. The Chief Executive added that Board Members would be welcome to attend one of the conferences. The Chairperson of the Board would speak at each of the conferences but was unavailable on one of the dates and it was agreed that Ms H Roulston would attend in his place on that day.

4. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 5 JULY 2012

LNI 01.09.12

4.1 On a proposal by Councillor C Casey, seconded by Mr R Dixon, Members approved the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 5 July 2012.
5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Board Meeting
Held on 5 July 2012

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 2.4: DCAL Strategic Partnerships Forum

5.2 The Chairperson reported that he had written to the Permanent Secretary, DCAL, to inform her of the discussion that had taken place at the July Board meeting regarding the new procedures proposed for completion of the Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Chairperson said that he had informed the Permanent Secretary that although Members had welcomed the minor amendments, concern had also been expressed about how far the Board could satisfy itself regarding the detail of the items listed on the new Quarterly Assurance Statement. The Chairperson had also suggested that another meeting be arranged for the Chairpersons of all of DCAL’s Arm’s Length Bodies to discuss further the proposed changes, but to date a reply had not been received.

Item 8.4: Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2011/12

5.3 Members noted that the Chief Executive had written to DCAL suggesting an amnesty period to encourage Members of the public to return library stock without incurring penalties but had not yet received a response.

Item 16.6: Recruitment Freeze

5.4 Mr Carvill asked whether a response had been received from DCAL to the correspondence from the Chief Executive in May asking that responsibility be returned to her, as Accounting Officer, to deal with staffing matters below 3rd tier. The Chief Executive indicated that a process had been agreed with DCAL to deal with short-term vacancies in front-line posts, but no response had been received to the more substantive issue. She had raised the matter at the Accountability meeting in May and been told at that stage that it was under consideration. No further information had been provided since then.

5.5 Members expressed concern regarding the time being taken by DCAL to respond to queries and asked that the Chief Executive raise these issues again with DCAL.

6. Minutes of the Information Systems Committee Held on
17 August 2012

6.1 On a proposal by Mr R Dixon, seconded by Ms J Williams, Members agreed to go into committee to consider the minutes of the meeting which are commercial in confidence.

6.2 On a proposal by Mr R Dixon, seconded by Ms J Williams, Members agreed to come out of committee.
6.3 The Chairperson reported that while in committee Members had considered the Minutes of the Information Systems Committee held on 17 August 2012 and noted the recommendations contained therein.

6.4 On a proposal by Ms J Williams, seconded by Ms A Matthews Members approved and adopted the minutes of the Information Systems Committee held on 17 August 2012 including the recommendations contained therein.

6.5 The Chief Executive reminded Members of the confidential nature of the minutes and asked that copies be returned to Officers for secure disposal.

6.6 It was agreed that in future the E2 Newsletters currently circulated to staff would also be sent to Board Members to keep them up to date with developments regarding the E2 project.

7. MANAGEMENT REPORT

7.1 KPI report
The Chief Executive introduced this report and informed Members that, since there are now no Public Service Agreements, DCAL would be monitoring Libraries NI’s performance using an agreed sub-set of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were linked to both the DCAL Corporate Plan and Balanced Scorecard and the Libraries NI Business Plan. Attention was drawn, in particular, to the following matters:

- Issues had decreased in the first quarter of the year compared to the same period last year. Further detailed analysis showed that there had been an increase in issues in April and May compared to the same period last year, but a significant decline in June, which could have resulted from the reduction in opening hours. On-going monitoring would be required to determine the impact of the reduction of opening hours on issue figures in the longer term. Use of E-books was continuing to increase

- Public Access Terminal (PAT) use has also decreased. This may be attributed to the decline in the migrant worker population due to the recession as well as the ongoing issue with bandwidth which impact detrimentally on speed

- Other measures of participation, relating to the number of, and participation in learning, heritage, information and culture programmes were well on target to be achieved.

7.2 Mr McDowell queried the target on reducing sickness absence levels, noting that DCAL’s own target was lower. The Director of Business Support noted that the target had been established within the context of the composition of the Libraries NI workforce and in that context was challenging.
7.3 Financial Position
The Director of Business Support presented the detailed Finance Report for the period to the end of July 2012, noting that it was expected that both recurrent and capital budgets would be fully spent at year end.

7.4 Summary Risk Register
Members noted that the Summary Risk Register and that the Risk Management Group was due to meet at the end of September to update the risk register for the 2nd quarter. The updated Risk Register would be taken to the October Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

7.5 Quarterly Assurance Statement
The Chief Executive reminded Members of the new process regarding completion and submission of her Quarterly Assurance Statement (QAS), whereby it had to be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee and approved by the Board before submission to the Department. Members noted that the timescales set by DCAL for this process to take place were unrealistic and did not take account of the normal schedule of Board and Audit and Risk Committee meetings. It was noted that in order to meet the deadline set by DCAL for submission of the QAS for the first Quarter (i.e. end of August 2012) the QAS had already been submitted to the Department. The next scheduled Audit and Risk Committee was not due to be held until 10 October 2012, so the QAS was being brought directly to the Board today. Any amendments made to it as a result of today’s Board meeting would be notified to the Department and the QAS would also be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its next meeting.

7.6 The Chief Executive briefed Members on the content of the Quarterly Assurance Statement and answered questions on it.

7.7 Concern was expressed at the requirement for the Board to approve the Chief Executive’s Quarterly Assurance Statement. The view was expressed that the assurances being given in the QAS were from the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer, and that the Board, while having a role in challenging and questioning the Chief Executive on the content of the Statement, did not have a role in approving it. It was felt that this requirement by the Department blurred the lines of responsibility and accountability between the Accounting Officer and the Board.

7.8 Having received a briefing from the Chief Executive on the Quarterly Assurance Statement for the period April – June 2012, on a proposal by Ms H Roulston, seconded by Mr P Carvill it was agreed to note that the Board had considered the Quarterly Assurance Statement, questioned the Chief Executive on aspects of it, and was content that it should be forwarded to DCAL.
8. BUSINESS PLANNING 2013/14: WORKSHOP

8.1 Members noted that the Board in developing the Corporate Plan 2011-15 and Business Plan 2012-13 had indicated that time should be set aside during 2012 to consider key strategic issues and priorities to be taken forward in 2013-14 and during the rest of the current CSR period. Discussion on these matters is also timely because of the review currently being undertaken by DCAL of the policy framework "Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries" and the opportunity to influence any revisions to the policy framework.

8.2 Each member of the Senior Management Team gave a short introductory presentation on issues affecting Libraries NI and answered questions, including on the following matters:

- the use being made of agency staff
- the breakdown of staff by age, gender and grade
- services to children being educated in the Irish medium
- partnerships with other statutory agencies, including other government departments, local councils, the BBC and UTV
- cross-border projects
- services to prisons, hospitals and nursing and residential homes
- awareness raising and promotion of services such as Rhythm and Rhyme
- the Libraries NI website
- the target groups
- services for people with disabilities.

8.3 Members discussed in detail strategic issues and priorities to be taken forward into 2013/14 and agreed that officers should consider how best to reflect these priorities in the Business Plan for 2013/14.

9. MARKETING PRESENTATION

9.1 Mr Glenn Beattie, Head of Marketing and Communications gave a presentation to Members showing how the Marketing and Communications Unit contributes to the strategic direction of the organisation and answered questions from Members.

9.2 Members thanked Mr Beattie for his informative and interesting presentation and it was agreed that he would return to update Members at a future meeting.

10. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

10.1 The Chairperson reminded Members that a review of the effectiveness of the Board would be carried out at the next Board Meeting and asked that some thought be given to how discussion on this should proceed.
11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Board would be held on Thursday 8 November at 10.30 am in Lisburn City Library.

12. **MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

12.1 The meeting ended at 1.20 pm.

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

- Councillor J Rodgers arrived at 10.35 am
- Ms A Matthews arrived at 10.46 am
- Councillor Mrs A Brolly left at 12.19 pm
- Councillor C Casey left at 12.52 pm

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 8 November 2012