LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority

11 December 2014

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of the Authority held on
Thursday 11 December 2014 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library

PRESENT

Professor Bernard Cullen
Councillor Hubert Nicholl
Councillor Mrs Anne Brolly
Councillor Tom Campbell
Councillor Charlie Casey
Councillor Sam Cole
Mrs Deirdre Kenny
Ms Angela Matthews
Mr Alastair McDowell
Councillor Séan McGuigan
Councillor John O’Kane
Mr Harry Reid
Councillor Mrs Evelyne Robinson
Alderman Jim Rodgers
Councillor Mrs Marion Smith
Ms Jane Williams

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Irene Knox
Mr Terry Heron
Ms Helen Osborn

Chief Executive
Director of Business Support
Director of Library Services

The Chairperson indicated that, with the agreement of the Board, it was proposed to
take agenda item 12 (Minutes of the Services Committee) immediately after agenda
item 6 (Matters Arising).

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Dr Margaret Ward

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 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.
3.  **CHAIRPERSON’S BUSINESS**

3.1 Professor Cullen expressed his pleasure at being appointed Chairperson of Libraries NI and his desire to work collaboratively with Members to build on the good work of his predecessor.

3.2 The Chairperson referred to his attendance, together with the Chief Executive, at a meeting of the DCAL ALB Strategic Forum, held in Parliament Buildings on 8 December 2014. The meeting had been chaired by Cynthia Smith, Acting Permanent Secretary, in the absence of the Minister who had been called away on urgent business. He asked the Chief Executive to brief Members on the meeting.

3.3 The Chief Executive informed Members that the main topic for discussion had been the budget cuts and their implications for the Department and its ALBs, including the impact on staffing levels and programme funding and delivery. Concerns had been expressed by the ALBs about the availability of sufficient central funding to enable voluntary redundancies to be implemented and the impact on Savings Delivery Plans of any delay in accessing such funding. ALBs had indicated the need to focus, at this stage, on the actions necessary to sustain their core business within the context of the budget cuts and, accordingly, there was a reluctance to consider future potential collaborations. DCAL had indicated its willingness to consider ways in which bureaucracy might be streamlined, while still maintaining the necessary level of good governance, and it was agreed that a working group would be established with representation from the ALBs to take this work forward.

3.4 The Chairperson reported on his attendance at a meeting of the Chairpersons’ Forum, held on 10 December 2014 which had been addressed by the Comptroller and Auditor General who highlighted key areas of interest, including Collaborative Procurement, PFI, Whistleblowing and Conflicts of Interest.

4.  **CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUSINESS**

4.1 The Chief Executive referred Members to the paper which had been circulated, drawing attention, in particular, to the undernoted items.

**Assembly Questions**

4.2 The Chief Executive drew attention to the large volume of Assembly Questions which had been received in the period 10 October 2014 – 28 November 2014 inclusive, many of which related to the temporary reduction in opening hours of libraries, required as a result of the in-year budget cuts.

**Budget 2015/16**

4.3 The Chief Executive drew attention to correspondence received from Mr P May, Interim Permanent Secretary, DCAL dated 6 November 2014 confirming that the Department would seek to limit the cuts to Libraries NI’s
budget for 2015/16 to 7.5% (against the 2014/15 original baseline), since the Minister had set, as a priority, that library closures should be avoided. She noted that this item would be discussed further at Item 7.

Value of Reading for Enjoyment

The Chief Executive referred to a Press Release which was issued by DCAL and DE as a result of a visit by both Ministers to a Children’s Reading Group in Lurgan Library on 13 November 2014 to highlight the contribution of reading to educational outcomes, one of the principles contained in the Memorandum of Understanding recently signed between Libraries NI and the Department of Education.

Invest NI

The Chief Executive reported that work was currently on-going between Libraries NI and Invest NI to finalise a Memorandum of Understanding which would facilitate Invest NI to use library premises to deliver its capability workshops and seminars on a sub-regional level, and in so doing, to promote Libraries NI services.

The Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (NI) 2015

The Chief Executive noted that following discussion at the Services Committee meeting, it had been agreed that, since Libraries NI met the criteria to be named as a statutory community planning partner, a response to this effect should be made to the consultation document. The Chief Executive noted that this response had been submitted and together with the Director of Library Services, and Ciaran Mee from DCAL, she had met with Nichola Creagh, DOE to reinforce the response.

Carnegie Trust UK: Library Lab

The Chief Executive reported that Ms E Russell, a member of the Libraries NI Children’s and Young Peoples Team, had been successful in her application to the Carnegie UK Trust under its programme of work aimed at enhancing innovation and leadership in public libraries. Her project, entitled ‘Rub-a-dub-hub’ will create a virtual library for pre-school children and their parents to encourage and support parents to read to, and with, their children and was one of only seven, across the UK and Ireland, which was successful in this round of applications.

Kilkeel Library

The Chief Executive reported that the new Kilkeel Library had gained a William Keown Prestige Access Award in recognition for its contribution to an accessible, user friendly environment. The Library was also mentioned as one of four highly commended exemplars for accessibility and inclusivity.

Fujitsu

The Chief Executive reported that she was delighted to welcome two Senior Executives from Fujitsu (Japan) on a visit to Bangor Carnegie Library. The visit was a courtesy call with regard to the e2 contract.
4.10 OECD Public Governance Review
The Chief Executive referred to the tabled memorandum from Dr Bernie Stuart, Head of Public Sector Reform Division, DFP, dated 9 December 2014, regarding the Executive’s decision to engage the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to conduct a strategic review of public sector reform in Northern Ireland. It was noted that the intention of the Review was to understand how public services in Northern Ireland compared with best practice across the world. All government Departments and a small sample of ALBs, including Libraries NI, had been identified to participate in the Review. A very detailed questionnaire, covering eight sub-themes, had to be completed and submitted to DFP by 16 January 2015.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2014

5.1 On a proposal by Ms J Williams, seconded by Mr A McDowell, Members approved the minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16 October 2014, subject to the following amendments:

Item 4.6: Delete ‘March’ and replace with ‘January’
Item 16.5: Delete ‘since its inception’.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2014

6.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to the circulated paper detailing action taken as a result of discussions at, and decisions of, the Board at the previous meeting. She drew attention in particular to the matters noted below.

Item 15.3: Ligoniel Library

6.2 Ligoniel Library was auctioned on 21 November 2014 and was ‘sold’ on the day, meeting the reserve price of £35,000. However, immediately following the auction it became apparent that the successful bidder did not have the funds available to pay the auctioneer’s fees or place the required deposit on the property. Moreover, since he was bidding on behalf of a third party, he did not have suitable power of attorney to allow him to sign a contract on their behalf. On advice from the Libraries NI legal representative and the auctioneer, the bidder was granted an extension until 25 November 2014 to allow funds to be secured and the power of attorney documentation to be produced. The bidder failed to attend the pre-arranged meeting with the auctioneer on that day and therefore was considered to have defaulted on the sale. The auctioneer has been asked to approach the under bidders to ascertain if they are still interested in purchasing the building and Land and Property Services have been contacted to seek their advice on the way forward. The Board will be kept informed.
6.3 Members agreed to arrange an event later in the year to thank the former Chairperson, Mr N Macartney, for his work for the Board since 2009.

7. MINUTES OF THE SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2014

7.1 The Chairperson of the Services Committee, Councillor Mrs A Brolly, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2014 and drew attention, in particular, to the undernoted items.

Item 7: Strategic Review of the Library Provision – Stage Two

7.2 Members had considered the two remaining libraries which were subject to review in October 2014 i.e. Greystone and Kilyleagh.

7.3 Members noted that the alternative provision, as proposed by Kilyleagh Development Association did not come to fruition and some cosmetic maintenance had been carried out in the existing building. The existing building, although not ideal, is adequate and usage of the Library is in line with other 18 hour libraries, with continued support from the Friends of Kilyleagh Library (FOLK). Following discussion the Committee had agreed to recommend to the Board that Kilyleagh Library remain open in the existing premises and that it should be monitored in line with other libraries.

7.4 The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) was keen to dispose of the building and a bid had been made to DCAL for Monitoring Round funding to enable the building to be purchased. That bid had been successful and a Business Case was currently being prepared for submission to DCAL to seek approval to proceed with the purchase.

7.5 The Chairperson of the Committee briefed the Board on the current position with Greystone Library which showed that visitor figures and participation in events and activities remained relatively high, although issue figures were declining and were more in line with those of an 18 hours library. Greystone Library is normally open for 30 hours per week, although this had been reduced to 20 hours per week as a result of the in-year budget cuts. Following discussion the Committee had agreed to recommend to the Board that Greystone Library should remain open, and that it should be monitored in line with other libraries, with the opening hours reduced to 20 hours until such time as library opening hours in general were reviewed.

7.6 Members noted the work that was on-going with Armagh City and District Council in relation to the potential relocation of Armagh Branch Library and the Irish and Local Studies Library to the St Patrick’s Trian Centre.

Item 8: Volunteer Policy

7.7 The Chairperson of the Services Committee briefed the Board in relation to the revised Volunteer Policy. She noted that this Policy recognised the
positive role that volunteers could play within the service and how the role of volunteers could complement that of paid employees. She noted that the Policy had been equality screened and was subject to consultation with the Unions.

7.8 On a proposal by Councillor S Cole, seconded by Councillor H Nicholl, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the Services Committee held on 18 November 2014, including any recommendations contained therein.

8. **DRAFT BUDGET 2015/16**

DCAL Consultation on Draft Budget

8.1 The Chief Executive drew attention to DCAL’s ‘Draft Budget 2015-16: Spending and Savings Proposals’, which had been published for consultation on 17 November 2014. The documentation offered some level of protection to Libraries NI to ensure that libraries remained open, recognising the essential role that they play within communities. The Draft Budget proposed a 7.5% budget cut for Libraries NI in 2015/16. The Chief Executive noted that the closing date for the consultation process was 29 December 2014, and referred Board Members to the draft response prepared on behalf of Libraries NI. Library users would also be provided with an opportunity to respond to the consultation with posters and response pro formas available in all libraries.

8.2 Following discussion, on a proposal by Mrs D Kenny seconded by Mr A McDowell, Members approved the response to the Draft Budget 2015/16, subject to inclusion at paragraph 7 of reference to the Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries Public Library Standard for stock spend.

Proposed Libraries NI Budget 2015/16

8.3 The Director of Business Support presented a paper setting out the proposed budget for 2015/16, based on a cut of 7.5% (equivalent to £2.385 million) on the opening baseline in 2014/15, noting that the document had been discussed also at the Business Support Committee meeting.

Savings Delivery Plans

8.4 The Director of Business Support presented the 2015/16 Savings Delivery Plans which set out how Libraries NI proposed to deliver the cuts of 7.5% against the opening position in 2014/15. He explained that Savings Delivery Plans covered four main areas:

- the stock budget would be reduced by £557,000
- staff costs would be reduced by cutting the opening hours of libraries by between 5 – 10% and implementing a voluntary redundancy programme, delivering savings of £1.466 million
- expenditure on planned and response maintenance would be reduced by £199,000
a further £161,000 would be found through various miscellaneous budget cuts, including computer costs, travel and marketing.

He referred also to the correspondence to Mr F Devitt, Director of Sport, Museums and Libraries, DCAL, dated 7 November 2014, which set out the assumptions underpinning the Savings Delivery Plans, noting in particular the implications if funding was not available centrally in a timely fashion to meet the costs of voluntary redundancy. He referred also to the four High Level Impact Assessments setting out the implications of the proposals in relation to Section 75 categories and mitigation measures.

8.5 Following discussion, on a proposal by Councillor Mrs E Robinson, seconded by Councillor T Campbell, Members approved the Savings Delivery Plans.

Review of Opening Hours LNI 03.12.14(iv)

8.6 The Director of Library Services presented the paper setting out the proposed approach, process and timetable for reducing library opening hours, noting that these were based on an assumption that confirmation of the 2015/16 budget would be received by the end of February 2015 and that the cut required was no more than 7.5%. She drew attention to the proposed principles which would be applied to the review process and in developing the proposals for consideration by the Board. It was noted that in order to deliver the required level of staff savings it would be necessary to reduce opening hours by between 5% and 10% compared with the opening hours which were in place in April 2014. The process would be subject to a public consultation exercise, including an Equality Impact Assessment and a Rural Impact Assessment.

8.7 On a proposal by Councillor Mrs E Robinson seconded by Ms A Matthews, Members agreed that officers should commence planning for the review of opening hours, although no action should be implemented until a final decision was made by the Minister on the 2015/16 budget.

The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee indicated that he would have to leave the Board Meeting early due to another commitment and sought permission to present the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee for approval at this point in the Meeting. The Board agreed to the request.

9. MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2014 LNI 07.12.14

9.1 The Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Alderman J Rodgers, presented the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 15 October 2014, noting that a verbal report on this meeting had been given at the Board Meeting held on 16 October 2014. He highlighted a number of items as set out below.
Item 7: Internal Audit Activity Report

9.2 It was noted that nine audit reports had been considered by the Committee and that of the nine, eight had received a Satisfactory level of assurance and one had received a Substantial level of assurance.


9.3 The Head of Internal Audit reported that the Internal Audit Annual Plan 2014/15 had called for the completion of 29 audit assignments during the year and, as at the end of September 2014, 14 had been completed. He confirmed that he was content that by the year end the plan would be materially complete and that he would be in a position to provide his annual assurance and opinion to the Accounting Officer and the Committee.

Item 11: Provisional Report to those Charged with Governance

9.4 Ms D Carville, Director Northern Ireland Audit Office had attended the meeting and presented the provisional Report to those Charged with Governance. Ms Carville reported on the two key strategic risks which were identified in the audit strategy, noting that although progress had been made to resolve the issue of Heritage Assets, the qualification would remain for 2013/14. She recognised that in respect of the other key strategic risk, the e2 project, no issues had been identified.

Item 12: Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Draft Annual Report

9.5 Members noted that following receipt of the provisional Report to those Charged with Governance from the Northern Ireland Audit Office the Committee had finalised its Annual Report.

Item 13: Bi-annual Assurance Statement

9.6 The Committee had reviewed the Chief Executive’s Bi-annual Assurance Statement and was content to recommend it to the Board for approval.

Item 14: Libraries NI Risk Management Strategy

9.7 The Committee had reviewed the Risk Management Strategy and incorporated a number of amendments, including a definition of a key risk, revisions to the Libraries NI Risk Appetite and also, on the recommendation of the Risk Management Group, included an overarching objective in the Corporate Risk Register relating to the impact of budget cuts and longer term financial uncertainty on the delivery of the organisation’s statutory obligations.

9.8 On a proposal by Alderman J Rodgers, seconded by Councillor S McGuigan, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held on 15 October 2014.

10. DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2015/16

10.1 The Chief Executive presented the Draft Business Plan 2015/16, taking into account the implications of the proposed budget cuts for 2015/16.
10.2 It was noted that the Draft Business Plan had been discussed informally with DCAL officials and must be formally submitted to DCAL by Friday 19 December 2014. The Business Plan would require Ministerial approval. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Plan could not be finalised until the outcome of the current budget consultation process was complete and final decisions were made on the 2015/16 budget.

10.3 Following discussion, on a proposal by Councillor Mrs E Robinson seconded by Councillor J O’Kane, the Board approved the Draft Business Plan 2015/16 for submission to DCAL. Members agreed also to delegate authority to the Chairperson and the Chief Executive to agree any minor amendments to the draft Business Plan that might be required by DCAL, noting that the Board would be consulted on any fundamental issues.

11. MANAGEMENT REPORT

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): End of Quarter 2

11.1 The Chief Executive presented the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the end of Quarter 2 (ie for the period April to September 2014). She noted that the majority of KPIs were on target at the end of September 2014, but highlighted that several KPIs particularly in relation to participation, were unlikely to be achieved by March 2015 because of the impact of the in-year budget cuts.

11.2 Members noted two areas where KPIs were not being achieved, namely:

- the target for sickness absence of an overall reduction of 8% was not being met because of the high level of long term sickness absences. Members noted that the Business Support Committee had received a presentation on the procedures in place to ensure that the Managing Attendance policy was being implemented and the action being taken to seek to address sickness absence.
- the target of 100% of invoices paid within 30 working days and 90% of invoices paid within 10 working days was not being met partly as a result of disruption caused during implementation of the e2 system.

11.3 Members noted the report.

Finance Reports (October 2014)

11.4 The Director of Business Support presented the capital and recurrent budget reports to October 2014. He noted that the recurrent budget included the £1.4 million in-year cut and, while there was currently a projected underspend in the recurrent budget at year end, work was underway with budget managers to ensure that all budgets were fully spent. The Director of Business Support confirmed that full spend was expected by year end in the capital budget, including the e2 project.

11.5 Members noted the reports.
12. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

12.1 The Chief Executive presented the Schedule of Meetings for the period January 2015 to March 2016, noting that, with effect from January 2015, all Committee meetings would take place on a Wednesday. Members noted that every effort would be made to adhere to the proposed schedule, but it may be necessary to change dates or add further dates, depending on business need.

12.2 Members noted the Schedule of Meetings.

13. MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2014

13.1 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee, Ms A Matthews, presented the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2014 and drew attention, in particular, to the undernoted items.

Item 3: Chairpersons Business

13.2 The Director of Business Support had briefed Members on the National Joint Council for Local Government Services Circular indicating that a 2.2% pay increase had been agreed nationally for employees, which would be applicable from 1 January 2015. This included a one off non-consolidated payment made to staff on points 5 - 25 and two payments to staff on points 26 – 49 (the second amount dependent on pay scale). It was noted that the Director of Business Support had confirmed that this increase could be managed within the current budget.

Item 8: 2015/16 Budget Cuts

13.3 The Chairperson of the Business Support Committee confirmed that the Savings Delivery Plan, discussed previously as a substantive item of the Board Agenda had been discussed in detail at the Committee Meeting.

Item 9: Draft Budget 2015-16: DCAL Consultation

13.4 Members noted that the Consultation Paper, discussed previously at this meeting, had also been discussed at the Committee.

Item 10: Sickness Absence Report

13.5 The Chairperson reported that levels of short and medium term sickness absence were improving but unfortunately levels of long term sickness absence were increasing. Members noted that the Committee would continue to monitor action being taken to seek to improve attendance levels.

Item 11: Absence Management Presentation

13.6 The Committee had received a useful presentation from the Deputy HR Manager outlining strategies which were being adopted in order to improve sickness absence levels. It was agreed to circulate a copy of the presentation to all Board Members for information.
13.7 On a proposal by Mr A McDowell, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Smith, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the Business Support Committee held on 25 November 2014 including any recommendations contained therein.

14. **MINUTES OF THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2014**

14.1 In the absence of the Chairperson of the Committee, the Director of Business Support presented the minutes of the Information Systems Committee meeting held on 16 September 2014, and drew attention, in particular, to the undernoted items.

**Item 6: e2 Highlight Report**

14.2 The Director of Business Support informed the Board that all of the technical milestones had been met within budget, although the new Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) system was still being implemented.

**Item 7: Project Evaluation Report**

14.3 The Committee had reviewed the Project Evaluation Report (PER) which covers lessons learned in the procurement and implementation stages of e2. The Committee had noted the challenging nature of the Project and the pressure that had been placed on the Project Team throughout the process. The PER would be submitted to DCAL prior to Christmas.

**Item 10: Social Benefits in e2**

14.4 The Director of Business Support reported that, as part of the social benefits incorporated within the e2 project, Fujitsu had identified 150 legacy computers which were still serviceable. They had agreed to recondition these machines and supply 50 computer kiosks to the Simon Community with a further 100 computers to be made available to other charities. There would be a small cost to the charities in order to meet the relevant Microsoft Charity Criteria.

14.5 On a proposal by Councillor Mrs E Robinson, seconded by Mrs D Kenny, the Board approved and adopted the minutes of the Information Systems Committee held on 25 November 2014 including any recommendations contained therein.

15. **ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS**

15.1 There was no other notified business.

16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

16.1 Members noted that the next scheduled Board Meeting would take place on Thursday 12 February 2015 at 10.45 am in Antrim Library.
17. **MEMBERS’ ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES**

17.1 The meeting ended at 12.40 pm.

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

- Alderman J Rodgers arrived at 10.35 am
- Ms J Williams left the meeting at 11.19 am
- Councillor Mrs A Brolly left the meeting at 12.02 pm
- Councillor S Cole left the meeting at 12.03 pm
- Councillor T Campbell left the meeting at 12.07 pm
- Alderman J Rodgers left the meeting at 12.13 pm
- Councillor Mrs M Smith left the meeting at 12.25 pm.

Signed: Bernard Cullen

Date: 12 February 2015