LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority

13 May 2015

Minutes of a special meeting of the Board of the Authority held on Wednesday 13 May 2015 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library

PRESENT

Professor Bernard Cullen Chairperson
Alderman Thomas Burns
Councillor Tom Campbell
Councillor Dr Janet Gray
Councillor Ms Claire Hanna
Councillor Garath Keating
Mrs Deirdre Kenny
Councillor Cathal Mallaghan
Ms Angela Matthews
Mr Alastair McDowell
Councillor Stephen McIlveen
Councillor Mrs Jenny Palmer
Alderman Mrs Marion Smith
Dr Margaret Ward
Ms Jane Williams

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Irene Knox Chief Executive
Mr Terry Heron Director of Business Support
Ms Helen Osborn Director of Library Services
Ms Adrienne Adair Assistant Director
Ms Mandy Bryson Assistant Director
Mr Ciaran Mee DCAL

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Alderman Stephen Martin
Councillor Séan McGuigan
Mr Harry Reid
Alderman Adrian Watson

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. OPENING HOURS POLICY REPORT

3.1 The Chairperson welcomed Mr C Mee, Museums and Libraries Branch, DCAL to the meeting. He informed Members that Ms H Osborn, Director of Library Services, would present the Opening Hours Policy Report.

3.2 The Director of Library Services reminded Members that Libraries NI’s recurrent budget for 2015/16 is £29,415,000, a reduction of 7.5% compared to the opening position in 2014/15. She noted that ‘emergency’ opening hours had been introduced in November 2014 as a result of in-year budget cuts of 4.4%. Given the need to take action quickly in order to deliver those in-year budget cuts the ‘emergency’ opening hours had been introduced without consultation.

3.3 Public consultation had now taken place on a draft policy which sets out the overarching approach that would be used to establish the opening hours of libraries and, in the context of that draft policy, the proposals for the opening hours of individual libraries, to take effect from October 2015. She noted that any reduction in opening hours meant a reduction in access to services with consequential impacts on participation. Members were reminded that the draft policy had been agreed by the Board at its meeting on 12 February 2015 as the basis for the consultation.

3.4 The Director of Library Services explained that the consultation process had taken place from 18 February to 17 April 2015. The consultation document had been made available in hard copy and on the Libraries NI website and questionnaires were available in every library, both in printed format and on the public access computers. She reported that 3,801 responses to the questionnaires and 23 written submissions had been received. She drew attention to the summary of the responses, as set out in the report, noting that a detailed analysis had been carried out by the NISRA statistician, seconded to Libraries NI.

3.5 Members noted also the summary of responses to the draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and that it had been updated and was included as an appendix to the report. The Director of Library Services reported also that in March 2015, during the consultation period, NISRA had published a Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements, which included recommendations for some changes to the previous classification of settlements to take account of the 2011 census. Although the recommendations have not yet been formally adopted, the Rural Impact Assessment had been updated to take account of those recommendations.
3.6 The Director of Library Services referred Members to the range of general issues identified by those who responded to the consultation and to specific issues relating to individual libraries, the EQIA and the RIA.

3.7 The Director of Library Services reported that further consultation was required in respect of the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies, a specialist public library at the Ulster American Folk Park. At present it was unclear how the budget cuts imposed on National Museums Northern Ireland would impact on the opening hours of the Ulster American Folk Park and the opening hours of the Folk Park and the Mellon Centre should be linked. Further consultation would take place with both parties and a report would be brought back to the Board through Services Committee in due course.

3.8 The Chairperson thanked the Director of Library Services for her report. He noted the high percentage of agreement expressed in relation to the proposed policy and the strong community interest in the public consultation.

3.9 Members congratulated the Director of Library Services on a comprehensive and easy to read report. In response to questions and comments from Members the following points were noted:

- the exceptions being proposed for social deprivation related to 12 urban libraries which have three or more Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the 10% most deprived in Northern Ireland, as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 and as set out in the 2015/16 draft Business Plan. While some respondents had suggested that libraries serving Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and Areas at Risk should also be treated as exceptions, this would result in a large number of additional libraries being included as exceptions and would result in the limited resources being dispersed more thinly.

- as a result of the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements published in March 2015, Crumlin was no longer defined as a rural settlement, whereas Bessbrook and Strathfoyle were now included as rural settlements.

- respondents to the Rural Impact Assessment had highlighted the differences between poverty and disadvantage in urban and rural communities, an issue which had been reflected also in previous public consultations, and had made a strong argument for recognition to be given to rural disadvantage. Accordingly it was proposed that the draft policy should be amended to include the possibility of exceptions being made for libraries serving rural areas. In the context of the 2015/16 budget situation, this would mean, as with libraries in urban areas serving three or more SOAs within the 10% most deprived, no library in a rural area should have its opening hours reduced by more than 10%. Members' attention was drawn to the implications of this proposal in respect of Keady, Maghera and Strathfoyle libraries which would not have their opening hours reduced by as much as originally proposed.
there was recognition that the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies was a different type of provision, used extensively by tourists and researchers and that the opening hours should complement those of the Ulster American Folk Park.

3.10 Ms A Matthews noted that as a result of the proposals in the new draft policy five libraries would have their opening hours increased i.e. Carryduff, Dromore, Finaghy, Moira and Woodstock. She suggested that in the current financial climate, when other libraries were having their hours reduced, consideration should be given to leaving the opening hours of these five libraries at their current level. She added that Portrush Library, under the new proposals would receive a significant reduction to its opening hours and suggested that an exception be made in this case. Ms A Matthews expressed the view that the background to the opening hours policy was the need to make savings and in that context it was not advisable to consult on and implement a policy which could result in an increase in the opening hours for some libraries whilst reducing opening hours in other libraries.

3.11 The Director of Library Services reminded Members that the draft policy had been agreed at the Board Meeting held on 12 February 2015 as the basis for the consultation process and that the majority of respondents to the consultation process had agreed with the proposals in the draft policy which sought to implement a consistent approach to decisions relating to opening hours. Portrush Library did not meet the criteria for any of the agreed exceptions and the proposed opening hours reflected historic use.

3.12 The Chairperson expressed the view that: where levels of participation in a particular library justified increased opening hours and the approach to determining those hours was in line with an agreed policy, opening hours should be increased accordingly.

3.13 Members discussed the issues raised by Ms Matthews but felt that the rationale for the establishment of opening hours as set out in the draft policy was appropriate in the circumstances. In order to seek to mitigate the reduction in opening hours in Portrush it was agreed, if possible, that the opening hours of Coleraine, Portrush and Portstewart libraries should complement each other in order to provide more opportunities for people in that area to access services.

3.14 Following further discussion of the draft policy and the implementation of the new opening hours, Members considered each of the recommendations in the Opening Hours Policy Report.

3.15 On a proposal by Councillor T Campbell, seconded by Councillor Ms C Hanna, the Board approved the Opening Hours Policy as set out below:
In establishing the opening hours of libraries, Libraries NI will seek to ensure that:

- a consistent approach is applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need and/or rural libraries
- opening hours relate to the historic level of use of a library
- the allocated hours are used in a way that best meets customer need
- the allocated hours in every library are sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
- the opening hours are affordable
- the opening hours are sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages should be avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

3.16 Ms A Matthews asked that her disagreement be recorded in the minutes for the reasons specified at 3.10 above.

3.17 On a proposal by Councillor S Mollvcon, seconded by Mr A McDowell, the Board approved and adopted the following proposal:

_In the context of the 2015/16 budget no library should open for less than 18 hours per week._

3.18 On a proposal by Councillor G Keating, seconded by Councillor Dr J Gray, the Board approved and adopted the following proposal:

_In the context of the 2015/16 budget, no library serving areas of substantial social deprivation (as listed in the Libraries NI Draft Business Plan 2015/16) and no rural library (as listed in the RIA) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%._

3.19 On a proposal by Alderman T Burns, seconded by Councillor Mrs J Palmer, the Board approved and adopted the following proposal:

_The opening hours of Lisnaskea Library should be retained at 30 hours per week, given that it is a new library on a new site. Use should be monitored._

3.20 On a proposal by Councillor C Mallaghan, seconded by Alderman Mrs M Smith, the Board approved and adopted the following proposal:

_Further consideration should be given to the opening hours of the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies following consultation with relevant parties and_
a report should be brought to the Board via the Services Committee in due course.

3.21 Members noted the Equality Impact Assessment and the Rural Impact Assessment.

3.22 The Chairperson informed Members that following the meeting staff would be informed of the Board’s decisions and a Press Release would be issued. He would also inform the Minister of the decisions. Local consultation on the pattern of opening hours in individual libraries would commence on 18 May 2015 followed by consultation with staff and Trades Unions regarding staff rotas and timetables.

4. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

4.1 The Chairperson confirmed that the Induction for new Board Members would take place on Thursday 11 June 2015, 10.00 am to 1.00 pm in Lisburn City Library. A programme would be issued in due course.

4.2 Members noted that the official opening of the new library in Lisnaskea would take place on Thursday 18 June at 11.30 am. Invitations would be issued to Members in due course.

4.3 The Chairperson reminded the new Board Members that they were required to undertake Corporate Governance Training within six months of being appointed to the Libraries NI Board. After discussion it was agreed to seek dates in September 2015 to accommodate this training and circulate them to Members.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

5.1 The next scheduled Board Meeting would take place on Thursday 2 July 2015 at 10:30 am in Lisburn City Library.

6. MEMBERS ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

6.1 The meeting ended at 11:41 am.

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

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 2/07/2015