LIBRARIES NI
The Northern Ireland Library Authority
Business Support Committee
Wednesday 31 March 2010

Minutes of a meeting of the Business Support Committee held in Armagh (former SELB Library Headquarters) on Wednesday 31 March 2010 at 10.30am

PRESENT

Mr Roger Dixon
Councillor Mrs Roberta Dunlop
Ms Angela Matthews
Councillor Cathal Mullaghan (for part of meeting)  
Vice-Chairperson

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive  
Director of Business Support  
Finance Manager

Ms Irene Knox
Mr Terry Heron
Ms Rita McNamee

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON ATTENDANCE

Councillor Mrs Evelyne Robinson  
Mr Nigel Macartney

Chairperson

In the absence of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson due to adverse weather conditions, it was proposed by Councillor Dunlop and seconded by Ms Matthews that Mr Dixon act as Chairperson.

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. There was no notified business.
4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 24 February 2010, which had been submitted to the Board, were approved.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

6. SCHEME FOR SPECIFYING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT COMMITTEE

6.1 The Director of Business Support informed Members that the Scheme had been referred back to the Committee by the Board so that further consideration could be given to the appropriate process for acceptance of tenders.

6.2 Discussion took place about the various options for acceptance of tenders including the appropriate level of delegation. The Finance Manager explained that most goods and services were procured through the Education & Library Board COPE from a catalogue of contracts which had been put in place through a competitive tendering exercise. The issue of acceptance of tenders applied therefore to the procurement of goods and services which were not included in the existing catalogue provided by the COPE.

6.3 Following discussion on the various options, Members agreed, on a proposal by Councillor Mrs Dunlop, seconded by Ms Matthews that:
   - the Chief Executive should have delegated authority to accept tenders up to the value of £10,000
   - tenders over that value should come to the Committee for approval
   - the delegated amount should be reviewed after one year
   - all single action tenders should come to the Committee for approval
   - during holiday periods when the Committee / Board did not meet, the Chief Executive should be granted executive powers to progress any urgent matters, with a detailed report being made to the next meeting of the Committee in respect of any such approvals given during the relevant period.

6.4 Members asked that where possible the tender reports should be planned so that they could be submitted to the Committee in advance and not as tabled papers and that tender reports contain sufficient detail to enable Members to understand fully the reason for the recommendation.
7  FINANCE REPORT: FEBRUARY 2010

Councillor Mullaghan apologised for his late arrival due to the adverse weather conditions and, as Vice-Chairperson, assumed the role of Chairperson for the remainder of the meeting.

7.1  Recurrent

7.1.1 The Finance Manager presented the actual recurrent spend to date and forecast recurrent spend to year end. She reported that the projected underspend of £941k was mainly due to an additional allocation of £413k from DCAL which was being used to assist with the financing of voluntary severance and emphasised that the report had been prepared prior to the approval of the voluntary redundancy business case and the subsequent implementation of the voluntary redundancy programme. She highlighted the risk of changes to the projected year end position after the opening balance figures had been received from the ELBs.

7.1.2 The Chief Executive updated Members on the position regarding a few outstanding library patrol attendant job evaluations.

7.1.3 The Finance Manager explained the system for managing and forecasting maintenance costs under the SLA with the ELBs. Members noted the risk that the actual cost of work could significantly differ from the estimated amount forecast in the system. Officers agreed to re-examine the controls in this area and report back to the Committee.

7.1.4 The Chief Executive reported that charges for licences were currently being examined and that Libraries NI was working with the library authorities elsewhere in the UK to ensure a co-ordinated approach to this matter.

7.1.5 Members asked for an extra column to be included in the Finance reports to show the previous month’s figures.

7.1.6 Members noted the report.

7.2  Capital

7.2.1 The Director of Business Support presented the paper showing the actual capital spend to date and forecast capital spend to year end. He reported that the spend was lower than anticipated mainly because the purchase of the Lisnaskea site could not be progressed because of a difficulty which had arisen in relation to the vendor being able to establish legal title.

7.2.2 Members noted the report.
8 POLICY ON BOARD MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE

8.1 The Director of Business Support presented a paper outlining proposals on how attendance at Committee and Board meetings could be monitored/regulated.

8.2 Members noted the proposed procedures, including the trigger point of less than 50% attendance over a 6 month rolling period by any Member at Board and relevant Committee meetings which would result in discussions between the Chairperson of the Board and the Member concerned. It was noted also that attendance at meetings was one of the issues which would be considered as part of the annual appraisal process of Board Members which the Chairperson was required to undertake.

8.3 On a proposal by Ms Matthews and seconded by Mr Dixon, Members agreed to recommend adoption of the policy.

9 POLICY ON BOARD MEMBERS' TRAVEL & SUBSISTENCE

9.1 The Director of Business Support presented the proposed policy on Board Members' Travel & Subsistence and drew Members' attention to the revised single page claim form. He emphasised the need for claim forms to be returned regularly (i.e. at least every 3 months) and that receipts would be required for all expenses claimed. He informed Members that if claim forms were returned by the 10th of the month payments would be included in Members' salaries at the end of that month.

9.2 The Director of Business Support agreed to send copies of the new claim form and JNC travel & subsistence rates to Board Members. In response to a query about the possibility of completed claim forms being submitted electronically the Director of Business Support replied that such an approach would only be possible if the system allowed for verifiable electronic signatures and that this facility was not yet available. He agreed to continue to explore this matter.

9.3 On a proposal by Mr Dixon, seconded by Councillor Dunlop, Members agreed to recommend adoption of the policy on Board Members' Travel & Subsistence.

10 VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCIES

10.1 The Director of Business Support reported that, on 24 March 2010, after the preparation of the Finance Report, approval for the voluntary redundancy business case had been received from DFP and 21 staff had been released with effect from 31 March 2010. DCAL had allocated an additional £1,307k towards the total cost of £2,091k and the balance had been funded from the £914k planned underspend shown in the Finance Report, reducing the projected year end underspend to £157k. Officers expressed their appreciation of the assistance which had been provided by DCAL throughout this process.
It was noted that DFP required a post project evaluation by 31 December 2010. It was further noted that discussions were on-going with DCAL regarding a final tranche of RPA-related voluntary redundancies during 2010/11.

11 DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS PROPERTY – FORMER BALEE LIBRARY

11.1 The Director of Business Support presented the paper updating the Committee on the sale of the former Ballee Library which had realised £87,000. Following recovery of disposal costs, the net amount of £82,245 would be surrendered to the Department.

11.2 Members sought clarification on the costs associated with obtaining an Energy Performance Certificate to facilitate the sale of the property. The Director of Business Support agreed to report back on this matter.

12 ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

12.1 There was no other notified business.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next meeting of the Business Support Committee will take place on Thursday 29 April directly after the Board meeting and workshop in Newry City Library. All Board Members will be invited to attend the workshop and the Business Support Committee will follow immediately afterwards.

14 MEMBERS’ ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

14.1 The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.

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

- Councillor Mullaghan arrived at 10.45am

Signed: 

Date: 5th May 2010