

MINUTES OF THE NINETY SEVENTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2016 AT 11.00 A.M. IN THE CASSINI ROOM, ARMAGH PLANETARIUM

Present: Archbishop Clarke (Chair), Professor A. Hibbert (Deputy Chair), Professor R. Oudmaijer, Professor T. Ray, Mr B. Hannam, Professor M. Merrifield, Mr S. Brown, Professor L. Harra, Mrs P. Wilson, Mr P. McGurgan, Dr M. McKay

Apologies: None

In attendance: Dr D. McMahon (DCAL Permanent Secretary), Mr F. Devitt (DCAL), Mr A. Hughes (Interim Accounting Officer), Professor M. Bailey, Dr J. Vink, Mrs E.J. Kennedy (Operations Manager), Mrs K. McLoughlin (temporary Accountant)

1. APOLOGIES

None

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Mr Hannam reported that the Strategic Investment Board, of which he is Chief Executive, is providing a staff resource for the Organisational Change Project.

3. PRESENTATION BY DR D MCMAHON, PERMANENT SECRETARY, DCAL

- 3.1. Dr McMahon shared his enthusiasm for astronomy and thanked the Committee for the invitation to attend the meeting. He and Mr Devitt set out the Department's early thinking on a possible range of support and development initiatives for AOP across a 5-10 year period. These concepts were based on discussions within the Department, the Organisational Change Project Board and on outputs from the September 2015 staff workshop. The Permanent Secretary said that the Department appreciated that AOP was an excellent resource for Armagh and Ireland and felt that significant extra funds should be invested to develop it further as a scientific and tourism facility. While he was unable to provide details of the likely investment at present, he assured all present that his Department were very supportive. This assurance was warmly welcomed by the Chair and all present.
- 3.2. Dr McMahon also took the opportunity to share learning from the recent Public Accounts Committee hearing on the Northern Ireland Events Company. He encouraged all Committee members to read the NIAO report, and noted particularly the importance of developing an appropriate 'culture', of training Committee and Board members, of the need to test assurances provided by the Executive and of building relationships.

Action Point MC28/01/16 – 01 Mrs Kennedy to circulate the NIAO report on the NI Events Company to Management Committee members

Dr McMahon and Mr Devitt left the meeting

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**4. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER
2015**

The minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2015 were reviewed, approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

An update on the Matters Arising can be found in the Action Point Log attached at Annex 1.

6. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 6.1. The Chair reported that since the last meeting Dr Vink had stood down from the position of Accounting Officer for the Planetarium. As a result Mr Hughes, DCAL, had been appointed as Interim Accounting Officer for both the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium with effect from 14 December 2015. The Chair welcomed him to AOP.
- 6.2. Dr Vink advised the Committee that he had not committed to remaining as Acting Head of the Planetarium beyond March 2016. He expressed concern that his research outputs had reduced while undertaking his role at the Planetarium, and he sought assurance from the Committee that he would not be disadvantaged. The Chair recognised the support Dr Vink had provided and confirmed that there would be no detrimental impact.
- 6.3. A lengthy discussion took place about a perceived lack of openness and transparency in the Observatory, for example, the process for selecting PhD students for 2016/17. Professor Merrifield and Professor Ray agreed to provide details of the process for selecting students for their institutions. It was also suggested that the Astronomers should have a planning day for 2016/17 and develop ideas for the Chief Executive (when appointed) to consider. Dr Vink was unhappy with the lack of opportunity to properly discuss this openness issue.

Action Point MC28/01/16 – 02 Professor Merrifield and Professor Ray to provide details of the process for selecting students for their institutions.

Action Point MC28/01/16 – 03 Professor Bailey to arrange an 'issues day' for the Astronomers.

7. UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Mr Hannam provided an update from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) which had met earlier on 28 January 2016. The Special Investigation was ongoing and the finalisation of the 2014/15 Annual Report and Accounts remained outstanding as a result. Additional funding had been awarded by DCAL for Internal Audit activities and Mr Hannam was hopeful that the 2015/16 work programme would be completed before 31 March 2016. The Committee had completed a self-assessment exercise and no significant issues had arisen.

8. UPDATES ON OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM ACTIVITIES

- 8.1. Professor Bailey provided an update on the work of the Observatory since the Committee last met in November 2015

A short break was taken for lunch.

- 8.2. Dr Vink provided an update on the work of the Planetarium during November and December 2015. It was agreed that consideration needed to be given to support arrangements for the theatre.

Action Point MC28/01/16 – 04 Dr Vink and Mr Hughes to investigate levels of maintenance and training support for the Digistar 5 equipment, subject to funding being available.

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- 8.3. Mr Hughes provided the Committee with an update from the Accounting Officer's perspective. It had been agreed at the ARAC that he should write to DCAL seeking retrospective approvals to regularise some of the irregular contracts that had been put in place by the previous Director of the Planetarium.
- 8.4. Mr Hughes presented the Risk Register. This was the first consolidated register for the AOP. The main area of concern was Risk 5 – Loss of key personnel and single point failure across several areas of the organisation. He noted that this risk could not be fully mitigated. The Committee was content that all risks relevant to AOP had been identified and assessed. It was also content with the actions recorded and that the risks were being managed adequately.

9. UPDATE ON FINANCIAL POSITION

- 9.1. Mr Hughes provided an update on the financial position of AOP. While DCAL had recently awarded additional funding through the January Monitoring round it was likely that a small proportion would have to be returned as it could not be spent before 31 March 2016 'for the intended purposes'. He commented on the close monitoring required of the Observatory's budget in relation to external grant funding and complimented Mrs McLoughlin and Professor Bailey for their work in this area.
- 9.2. He also drew the Committee's attention to the Savings Delivery Plan that set out the potential impacts of budget reductions proposed for 2016/17. The budget reduction had also been reflected in the draft Business Plan for 2016/17 that was to be discussed later in the meeting. The Committee noted the financial position for 2015/16 and the scenario planning for 2016/17.

10. DRAFT AOP BUSINESS PLAN 2016/17

- 10.1. Mr Hughes explained that the draft 2016/17 AOP Business Plan had been developed for consideration by the DCAL. He alerted the Committee to a reduction in some of the KPI targets due to the conditions AOP would likely be operating under in 2016/17. He explained that it was likely that the next draft of the Business Plan would be required at short notice once the Minister has decided on individual budgetary allocations.
- 10.2. It was agreed that it could be considered on behalf of the Management Committee by Professor Hibbert in the first instance, and if necessary he would determine if it should be circulated to all Committee members for approval.

11. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

- 11.1. Following the discussion at the Management Committee meeting in November 2015 about the Performance Management process, work had been taken forward by Mr Hughes and Mrs Kennedy to develop a single process for AOP based on the NICS process. A draft was to be provided to the Employment Conditions and Remuneration Committee in due course.

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12. AOB

- 12.1. Update on implementation of Recommendations from Grievance and Disciplinary Reports – Mrs Kennedy reported that all but one of the recommendations had been implemented. She was hopeful that the outstanding recommendation could be completed before the end of February 2016.
- 12.2. Update on Interchange arrangements for Operations Manager – An Interchange Interest Circular had been published in mid-January 2016 to provide business continuity for the critical post. Expressions of interest were to be provided by 5 February 2016.
- 12.3. Mrs Kennedy provided the Committee with details of training courses relevant to them and asked anyone interested in registering for these or future courses, to contact her.

The Executive team left the meeting to allow the Committee to continue in private.

13. UPDATE ON ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE PROJECT

Professor Hibbert provided an update on the Organisational Change Project. The Project Board was to meet later on 28 January 2016. It was considering the governance arrangements for AOP. Professor Hibbert also provided an update in relation to the Chief Executive recruitment exercise. The Committee noted the current position. The Chair thanked those who had been involved in the recruitment process.

14. UPDATE ON AOP 2016/17 VOLUNTARY EXIT SCHEME

Professor Hibbert provided an update on progress with the Voluntary Exit Scheme.

15. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 8 June 2016 at 11am in the Boardroom, Armagh Observatory.

The meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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(Chair)

Dated:

Updated Actions as at 28 January 2016

Reference	Action	Owner	Progress
MC13/11/14 - 02	Dr Mason to make arrangements to obtain an indication of the potential lease value of land SELB are interested in	Mr Hughes	Propose to close [proposal rejected 28/01/16] 28 January 2016: No further contact has been made by SELB about accessing additional land from the Planetarium 21 January 2015: Dr Mason to obtain this information
MC13/11/14 - 03	Dr Mason to arrange a meeting with the SELB to discuss the potential of leasing land from AOP	Mr Hughes	Propose to close [proposal rejected 28/01/16] 28 January 2016: No further contact has been made by SELB 20 October 2015: SELB contacted Jorick Vink to arrange a meeting but it was cancelled by them on the day the meeting was to take place. 4 June 2015: The Committee agreed to await further contact from SELB. 21 January 2015: A meeting took place on 21 November 2014 with the SELB architect and on 20 January 2015 with the SELB representative Paul Crooks. Another meeting is to be arranged for both Directors with SELB representatives
MC29/01/15 - 01	Dr McKay to explore within ESA if exhibits could be provided to the Planetarium	Dr McKay	Ongoing 28 January 2016: Dr McKay to introduce Planetarium representative to the ESA teams to pursue potential exhibits. 12 November 2015: Dr McKay indicated that some items could be made available. He agreed to discuss options with Dr Vink
MC29/01/15 - 03	New Management Board to consider the areas of concern arising from the Board Evaluation Questionnaire	Chair of new Management Board	Ongoing 28 January 2016: The Organisational Change Project Board is considering these. 28 May 2015: No action has been taken
MC29/01/15 - 05	Board Operating Framework to be updated following any new governance arrangements arising from the Review of Organisation and Management	Mrs Kennedy	Ongoing 28 January 2016: The Organisational Change Project Board is considering new governance arrangements. 28 May 2015: No action has been taken
MC04/06/15 - 06	Mrs Kennedy to share the draft agreement with Mr McGurgan and also liaise with the Planetarium's solicitor	Mrs Kennedy	Ongoing 28 January 2016: Ongoing discussions with the solicitor and Atlas Communications about the production of maps to accompany the lease.

			28 October 2015: Mr McGurgan provided his comments on the draft lease and correspondence has continued with the solicitor. The current hold up is in relation to obtaining maps of the property as quoted throughout the lease.
MC12/11/15 - 01	Professor Hibbert, Professor Bailey and Dr Vink to develop a timetable for the completion of outstanding 2014/15 performance reviews and the 2015/16 process, and subsequently update the Management Committee	Professor Hibbert, Professor Bailey and Dr Vink	Ongoing 28 January 2016: The 2012-14 Observatory reviews have been finalised. The 2014/15 reviews are to be completed asap. A template report (based on NICS approach) that could be used in 2016/17 has been developed for consideration.
MC12/11/15 - 02	A sub-group of the Management Committee was to be established to work with Dr Vink on developing options as to how savings could be made in 2016/17 and the implications of doing so.	Management Committee & Dr Vink	Propose to close 19 January 2016: This meeting did not take place. A draft balanced budget and Savings Delivery Plan for AOP has since been developed for 2016/17.
MC12/11/15 - 03	Dr Vink to continue discussions with Eir UK with regards to exploring their proposal in more detail.	Dr Vink	Ongoing 21 January 2016: Nothing to report
MC12/11/15 - 04	Management Committee members to contact the Operations Manager if they wished to register for courses relevant to their appointment.	Management Committee	Propose to close

Matter Arising

Paragraph 5	Archbishop, Professor Hibbert and Mr Hannam to meet with Denis McMahon, DCAL Permanent Secretary		The meeting took place at the end of 2015.
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