

MINUTES OF THE NINETY THIRD MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2014 AT 11.30 A.M. IN THE BOARDROOM, ARMAGH OBSERVATORY

Present: Professor A. Hibbert (Deputy Chair), Professor T. Ray, Dr M. McKay, Professor M. Merrifield, Mr B. Hannam, Professor R. Oudmajer, Mr Brown, Mrs Wilson and Mr, McGurgan

Apologies: Archbishop Clarke (Chair), Professor L. Harra

In attendance: Professor M. Bailey, Dr T. Mason, Mrs E.J. Kennedy (Operations Manager), Mrs K. McLoughlin (temporary Accountant)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded as above.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2014

The minutes of the meeting of 5 June 2014 were reviewed, approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Deputy Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Professor Hibbert explained to the Committee that it was required to evaluate its effectiveness on an annual basis. A copy of a National Audit Office Board Evaluation Questionnaire that he had completed and added some comments to was circulated. Members were asked to consider the draft responses and respond to Professor Hibbert by Friday 21 November 2014. Mrs Wilson queried if the Board of Governors had to complete a similar exercise. Professor Hibbert reported that the Board of Governors had not completed an evaluation exercise. It is transforming itself into a Board of Trustees. The Management Committee carries out the policies of the Board. He also referred to the financial cuts as being one of the main issues that affects us.

Action Point MC13/11/14 – 01 Members of the Management Committee to provide comments to the Deputy Chair on the draft Evaluation Questionnaire by Friday 21 November

6. UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

6.1. Mr Hannam provided an update from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting. The ARAC had considered the NIAO report following the External audit in 2013/14 and the recommendations arising from the internal audit in 2014/15 in which the following ratings were received:

- IT Security & Business Continuity – Limited Assurance;
- Safeguarding Arrangements – Substantial Assurance;
- Payroll – Satisfactory Assurance;
- Expenses - Satisfactory Assurance;
- Procurement - Substantial Assurance; and
- Follow-up on previously accepted recommendations - Satisfactory Assurance.

The ARAC was content that action was planned or underway.

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- 6.2. Mr Hannam informed the Committee that a Revised Fraud Policy was to be presented to it at a later date. He reminded the Management Committee of the need for more members.
- 6.3. Mr Brown commented that substantial assurance ratings were rare and should be commended. Following the award of Limited Assurance for IT Security and Business Continuity, discussion continued on the filling of the Computer Support Manager position, which would become vacant due to the retirement of the current post holder. Professor Hibbert updated the Committee on recent approval granted by DCAL but reminded them that the conditions attached to recruiting remained the same. Mrs Wilson voiced her concern at the recommended short overlap period. The Committee asked for the recruitment exercise to commence as soon as possible.

7. SELB REQUEST FOR ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM LAND

- 7.1. Mr Hannam declared a conflict of interest in this matter as a member of his family is employed by the Armstrong Primary School. Dr Mason shared with the Committee a presentation provided by the SELB (previously at a meeting attended by the Archbishop, Professor Hibbert and himself). A request to lease more land for the Armstrong Primary School had been made to allow it to meet the requirements for outdoor play. The primary problem for the Planetarium was that the desired area was used for rocket launching by children visiting (6 days per week). Dr Mason expressed his reluctance to lease the land as it would place constraints on current and future use by the Planetarium and Observatory.
- 7.2. Discussion continued on whether the land use could be shared by both AOP and the school. The geology of the land was also discussed in relation to excavation that was required to allow for a multi-use games area to be developed. Professor Oudmaijer queried the value of the lease. He thought that any inconvenience leasing the land would bring to AOP could be weighed against a significant income. Mr McGurgan felt that the potential withdrawal of rocket launching for thousands of children was of more concern than the value of the lease. It was agreed that an indication of the value of a lease was to be sought.

Action Point MC13/11/14 – 02 Dr Mason to make arrangements to obtain an indication of the potential lease value

- 7.3. The Committee agreed that possible options included 1) not leasing the land 2) lease at a peppercorn rent level 3) lease dependent on the value of the rent, that is if the value outweighed the inconvenience 4) provide access for the school through AOP land to alternative grounds for example, the Royal School Armagh sports ground, which had already been leased by AOP to SELB. It was agreed that Dr Mason would to arrange a meeting with the SELB to discuss options.

Action Point MC13/11/14 – 03 Dr Mason to arrange a meeting with the SELB to discuss the potential of leasing land from AOP

8. RESULTS OF THE PLANETARIUM CUSTOMER SURVEY

Dr Mason presented the findings from the survey (Paper 4). He was very pleased that the results had been so positive and continued to highlight the things the Planetarium staff were already aware of through the evaluation sheet that was available to customers all year round. Mr Hannam explained that the percentage of visitors from outside Northern Ireland (25%) was much higher than the average across other tourist organisations. He suggested Tourism Ireland should be included as a response to the question ‘how did you find out about Armagh Planetarium?’ Dr Mason explained that he had been in contact with the European Space Agency for materials to update the exhibition area and it was agreed that STFC should also be approached.

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Action Point MC13/11/14 – 04 Dr Mason to continue discussions with ESA and also approach STFC with regards to updating the Planetarium’s exhibition area

9. QUB PERIODIC REVIEW OF ARMAGH OBSERVATORY

Professor Bailey provided an update on the recent Review of the current collaborative agreement between Armagh Observatory and the Queen’s University, Belfast. He understood that the QUB Academic Council were shortly to approve the Panel report and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The Management Committee granted approval for the MOA to be signed by the Director.

10. DIRECTORS’ UPDATES

- 10.1. Mrs Kennedy provided a brief update on the KPIs and PESTPSE targets as at 31 October 2014 (Paper 5). Dr Mason provided an update on risk management in relation to the current funding position. The Planetarium had forecast a £10k deficit. He requested that consideration be given to using the Observatory’s reserves to deal with deficit. Professor Bailey explained that the Observatory had built up reserves over a number of years and the current Reserves Policy stated that the Observatory must retain £67k. Currently the Observatory had slightly more than this. In the past a loan had been used to deal with similar situations. It was agreed that the matter was to be deferred to the next meeting of the Management Committee.
- 10.2. Under staffing matters, Dr Mason reported that DCAL had granted permission to fill the vacant post of Front Desk and Shop Sales officer and provide cover for a maternity leave, however he required more clarity on the budget for 2015/16 before making a decision to fill these vacancies. Professor Hibbert remarked that the SIB Review was all about staffing and we cannot do anything until we’ve agreed a way forward on the SIB Review.
- 10.3. Mr Brown queried the return on investment in promotional activities. Dr Mason explained that the Planetarium had a very small budget and was able to achieve good deals with local newspapers. Past experience indicated that a reduction in advertising led to a reduction in ticket sales.
- 10.4. Professor Bailey drew the Committee’s attention to the Observatory’s involvement in the Daniel K. Inouye Solar Telescope (Paper 7, page 7). If successful, this project would provide a good example of how relatively small amounts of government investment in research astronomy, can lever substantial inward investment in to Northern Ireland whilst supporting the fundamental research goals and international links which underpin the success of both the Observatory and Queen’s University, Belfast on the international stage.
- 10.5. He also presented an update on external grant funding that had recently been awarded, page 57. Professor Oudmaijer congratulated the Observatory on the announcement of a substantial award from the STFC for the 3 year Consolidated Grant 2015-2018, given the small size of the organization.
- 10.6. A summary of the visit by President Michael D Higgins was included at page 53 of his report.
- 10.7. Professor Bailey informed the Management Committee that scanning, digitizing and microfilming of 1835 Ordnance Survey maps for a further eight counties had been completed, page 61. The maps are stored and made available for public access through the Armagh Public Library and are coming under increasingly heavy use.

Review of Updated Risk Registers

- 10.8. The Management Committee considered the Risk Registers for the Planetarium and the Observatory. The chair of the ARAC recommended that they be accepted. The Management

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Committee was content that all the relevant risks had been captured, assessed and managed adequately.

Bi-Annual Assurance Statements

10.9. Professor Hibbert updated the Management Committee on changes to the DCAL Governance Arrangements - Assurance Statements were to be considered twice a year as opposed to quarterly. Attention was drawn to the Internal and External audit section for the Planetarium. The Statements were considered by the ARAC and recommended that they be accepted. It was agreed that the Archbishop should be asked to sign the Chair's statement on both.

11. AOB

11.1. The Director of the Observatory requested approval for four members of staff to be added to the e-Banking facility for a European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) Programme to which it had been awarded the position of Grant holder. It was agreed that the forms could be signed by the Archbishop.

11.2. Dates for future meetings were agreed as 29 January 2015, 4 June 2015 and 12 November 2015.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on **Thursday 29 January 2015** in the Armagh Planetarium.

The meeting ended at 13.40.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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(Chair)

Dated:

Action Point Log of the Management Committee of Armagh Observatory and Planetarium

Reference	Action	Owner	Progress
MC18/10/13-01	Explore informal co-operation with the Armagh Public Library at the next Library Sub-Committee meeting	Professor Hibbert and Mrs Wilson	Ongoing 4 November 2014: Arrangements have been made through DFP Properties Division for bore holes to be drilled to determine if there is rock under the hill where the library is planned to be located. 28 May 2014: A meeting between Prof Hibbert and Primrose Wilson took place on 4 March 2014. Primrose explained that the Armagh Public Library project is much further progressed than the Observatory project. It does not seem possible for there to be a joined project for both. 23 Jan 2014: Meeting scheduled for late November had to be postponed. An informal discussion to take place with the Dean to explore extending the links with the Armagh Public Library.
MC18/10/13-08	RTE Junior channel to be approached by end of December 2013 about making a children's television programme on astronomy in the Planetarium	Dr Mason	Completed 4 November 2014: RTE filmed on site on 4 July 2014 for 'Una's Dream Ticket' which will be aired in December 28 May 2014: Dr Mason will explore this in more detail during 2014. 23 Jan 2014: Dr Mason is exploring the potential for this. Professor Ray explained that there are already links between RTE Junior and CBBC as they recently commissioned a new series of 'Brain Freeze' which will be aired on both channels. The Science Foundation Ireland has provided a grant to help with the production of the series.
MC18/10/13-11	Chairman to consider the request for new nominations to ARAC	Chair	Ongoing 4 November 2014: New appointments have been made to the Management Committee. The Chair is now in a position to consider new appointments to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. 28 May 2014: As yet DCAL has not made any appointments to the Management Committee. 23 Jan 2014: This can only be resolved when the criteria for membership has been considered by the Chair. A meeting is to be convened between the two Chairs to discuss this.
MC23/01/14-03	Confirm whether the Organisational Review team should receive remuneration	DCAL	Ongoing 5 November 2014: Email sent to DCAL requesting an update 28 May 2014: A letter was sent to DCAL on 14 May 2014 requesting resources and the commissioning of the review.

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MC23/01/14-06	Provide a finalised version of the Board Operating Framework to the Review team.	Mrs Kennedy	Completed 4 November 2014: A copy of the Board Operating Framework was provided to the Review team
MC05/06/14-01	Internal self-assessment of Management Committee effectiveness to be completed over the summer period	Chair	Ongoing 4 November 2014: Prof Hibbert to discuss further at meeting on 13 November 2014
MC05/06/14-02	Terms of Reference for Review of Organisation and Management of AOP to be amended to reflect new reporting timetable	Mr Hannam	Completed 4 November 2014: The Terms of Reference was updated to reflect the new reporting timetable
MC05/06/14-03	Process to be agreed with the Chair for the Management Committee to consider the findings of the Review of Organisation and Management	Chair	Completed 4 November 2014: A special meeting has been arranged for the afternoon of 13 November 2014, during which the Review team will present their findings and answer questions
MC05/06/14-04	Meeting to be arranged between Chair of Management Committee, the Directors and representatives from SELB to explore in greater detail the request for land for Armstrong PS	Dr Mason	Completed 4 November 2014: Meetings took place on 24 June 2014 and 4 September 2014. Dr Mason will provide an update at the meeting on 13 November 2014