

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTY NINTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2010 AT 10.30 A.M. IN THE CASSINI ROOM, ARMAGH PLANETARIUM

Present: Dr F. Byrne (Acting Chairman), Dr R. Oudmaijer, Professor A. Hibbert, Mrs S Hogg, Archdeacon R. Hoey and Mr S. Shields

Apologies: His Grace, the Most Reverend A.E.T. Harper, Professor P. Dufton, Mr A. Peoples, Mrs P. Wilson, Mr E. Donnelly, Professor T. Ray and Professor M. Merrifield

In attendance: Professor M. Bailey, Dr T. Mason and Mr L. Young

Members of the Committee confirmed that there were no conflicts of interest arising from the matters to be discussed at the meeting.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 NOVEMBER 2010

- 1.1. The reference in the draft minutes to the Public Records Office was amended to the organization's correct title the Public Record Office. The minutes of the meeting were then approved and signed by the Acting Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 2.1. Minute 3.4 The Acting Chairman asked that a draft Strategic Plan be prepared for submission to the next meeting of the Board of Governors in March 2010 and also distributed to the Management Committee for their comments.
- 2.2. Minute 4.7 Professor Bailey informed the meeting that no funds had been obtained to refurbish and install the sculpture by artist Brian Connolly in the Observatory grounds. However the Armagh City and District Council are interested in installing the sculpture in the Mall, Armagh. The Acting Chairman recorded his appreciation for Professor Bailey's excellent work in promoting Armagh.
- 2.3. Minute 4.19 The Acting Chairman said that the arrangements for the Observatory and Planetarium to join the Northern Bank pool are still on hold pending a Northern Bank/DFP review of the process for adding organizations to the pool.
- 2.4. Minute 4.20 The Acting Chairman said that the Directors are consulting the legal advisors on the legal implications of the recent NICS Equal Pay settlement and will report on their conclusions in due course.
- 2.5. Minute 4.39 The Acting Chairman referred to the impending retirement of the Administrator in August 2011. After discussion the Committee agreed that recruitment should take place in early 2011 with a view to appointing in April 2011. The Committee asked Mr Young to consult with DCAL on whether they could provide an expert to provide advice to the selection panel or to serve on the panel. The Committee asked Mr Young to draft the job specification for the post and provide advice on the selection process but agreed that it would be best practice that Mr Young was not a member of the selection panel.

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3. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 3.1. The Committee noted the letter of 11 January 2010 to the Chairman from Mr Smart, Head of DCAL's Museums Branch, in respect of the process required for the recruitment of staff, the number of management meetings, the membership of the Committee, corporate governance and the public appointments process. Professor Oudmaijer said that particularly in the recruitment of senior academic staff salary rates have to be competitive and it may be necessary to appoint at above the minimum point on the pay scale. The Acting Chairman acknowledged that there is some degree of flexibility on these matters and the organization should work with DCAL to resolve any such issues.
- 3.2. A further letter of 9 February 2010 from Mr Smart to Mr Young was submitted to the Committee. Mr Smart's letter acknowledged the professionalism and thoroughness in which business was conducted at the last meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC) on 12 January 2010. The Acting Chairman thanked Professor Hibbert and his colleagues for their work on the ARMC.

4. DIRECTORS' INTERIM REPORTS AND DRAFT BUSINESS PLANS 2010/2011

The Acting Chairman thanked Professor Bailey for his very comprehensive draft Annual Report Calendar Year 2009 and Financial Year 2009/2010 which was included in the Committee papers for information and asked Professor Bailey to present his Interim Report.

Professor Bailey referred to the following matters:

- 4.1. The table of statistics for the calendar year 2009 and financial year 2009/2010 and the table of historical statistics show positive trends. The rate of return of external grant income over total income and the administration efficiency rate were good. Staff absences and refereed journals were at a reasonable level and identified media mentions continued at a high level. External income is increasing at a very satisfactory rate. The statistics for the year 2009/2010 were verified by the Internal Auditors as part of the audit field work.
- 4.2. Funding from the DCAL for core running costs has shown an upward trend which is very encouraging and confirms that the Department is working hard to support the Observatory. With the uplift provided in the DCAL grant announcement letter it will be possible to provide a balanced budget in 2010/2011. Details of the draft Business Plan budget for 2010/2011 and the expected financial outturn for 2009/2010 are appended to the Report.
- 4.3. The Observatory received in-year capital grant of £50k for the Variable Star Telescope project and £10k for new air conditioning for the Bungalow computer room. Both projects are progressing satisfactorily although the final costs are not yet known.
- 4.4. The Observatory is projecting a balanced financial outcome for 2009/2010 although there is uncertainty about whether the Observatory is required to pay back pay due to the NICS settlement on Equal Pay. The cost of changing the pay scales back to February 2009 is included in the projection but no allowance has been made for a compensatory payment back to 2003. This will be a significant amount for the Observatory, in the region of £42k.
- 4.5. The Observatory has been subject to a growing number of requests for meteorological data. The raw data are presented as scanned images on the Observatory's climate web-site. It is the Observatory's policy to provide only calibrated data in a more convenient digital format to people who may request such information. After discussion the Committee endorsed this policy.

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- 4.6. Future events include: Miruna Popescu will represent the Armagh Observatory at the Big Bang Fair in Manchester from 2010 March 11-13; the Armagh Heritage Day 2010 will take place in the Navan Centre on 19 May 2010; the International Meteor Conference will take place in Armagh from 2010 September 16-19; the annual meeting of the Atomic Data and Analysis Structure consortium will be held in Armagh in early October 2010; and the Robinson Lecture will take place on the evening of 18 November 2010.
- 4.7. Mr Shields said that the financial report of the Observatory is very positive. This is very impressive in the present climate and should be acknowledged.
- 4.8. In response to a question from Professor Oudmaijer, Professor Bailey said that most of the external income came from the STFC but a significant amount of income had been received for IYA 2009 activities and from the Leverhulme Trust. Professor Oudmaijer said that due to financial pressures on the STFC it may be difficult to maintain the current level of income from this source in the future.
- 4.9. Professor Bailey said that the Business Plan for 2010/2011 has not yet been completed but the draft budget for the year has been included in the papers. One of the objectives for the year will be to continue, as resources allow, to restore some elements of the Observatory's historic library, archives and museum collection at Armagh. This is important as it aligns closely with the objectives of DCAL and the heritage of astronomy at Armagh is a matter which the public can identify with.
- 4.10. During discussion of the Observatory Risk Register Professor Bailey said that both the funding and the administrative risks had reduced.

Dr Mason referred to the following matters in his Report:

- 4.24. The Equal Pay issue referred to earlier will also affect the Planetarium and the projected financial impact is shown in the papers.
- 4.25. The issue relating to the payment of subsidised employee pension contributions is with the DCAL/DFP for adjudication.
- 4.26. All new staff have been fully briefed on Health and Safety arrangements at the Planetarium. There has been one minor accident involving a member of staff who slipped at the Planetarium staff entrance during the recent heavy snow.
- 4.27. The Internal Audit fieldwork should be completed by mid February 2010.
- 4.28. The Planetarium web-site has been updated to take account of new Freedom of Information regulations. Further work on the web-site is in hand to improve the links to information.
- 4.29. Three Education Support Officers were appointed in January 2010 to replace staff who left in 2009. They are undergoing intensive training on their roles and the work of the Planetarium.
- 4.30. All Planetarium staff received refresher Safeguarding training in January 2010 together with a number of Observatory staff who were unavailable for the Observatory Safeguarding training.
- 4.31. Following recommendations from the last Internal Audit a systematic back-up of the Digistar hard disk drives has been put in place.
- 4.32. The Planetarium is experimenting with cloud computing, working with mobile devices and working on Twitter feeds.
- 4.33. In Dr Mason's review of the Planetarium's performance against key performance indicators for 2009/2010 he said that visitor numbers, which are projected at 40,500 for the year, although reasonably good need to be boosted. The Planetarium continues to devote time and effort to working off-site as part of the Outreach activities and numbers projected for the year are ahead of target.
- 4.34. The Planetarium web-site has a high ranking in the Google site ratings which shows how well the web-site is doing.

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- 4.35. In response to a question from Mrs Hogg Dr Mason agreed that attracting more elderly visitors to the Planetarium should have more focus.
- 4.36. Mr Shields said that programmes such as the EMU programme were very valuable in encouraging cooperation between schools and in promoting mutual understanding. Dr Mason confirmed that this programme had ended. Mrs Hogg said that schools do receive funds for after school activities as part of the extended schools programme which may be of assistance to the Planetarium.
- 4.37. Dr Mason said that the primary objective in the draft Business Plan 2010/2011 is to increase visitor numbers. The key actions needed to achieve the targets for the year are:
- the Planetarium will seek to broaden its message by getting involved in teacher training partnerships with the teacher training colleges;
 - the video conferencing service will be developed to provide a means of interaction with schoolchildren in their classroom;
 - new shows will be developed which will service new audiences;
 - the schools visitor programmes will be revised;
 - the exhibit and display areas will be developed and renewed;
 - the Planetarium will continue to develop collaborative initiatives with European and worldwide institutions in science education and space exploration;
 - the work with those with visual and hearing impairment will be developed;
 - marketing initiatives will be reviewed and developed as outlined in the Marketing Plan appended to the Interim Report;
 - plans to upgrade the Digistar projection equipment will be progressed.

5. REPORT OF THE ACTING CHAIR OF THE AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (ARMC)

Professor Hibbert referred to the following matters:

- 5.1. The minutes of the last meeting of the ARMC on 12 January 2010 and the Internal Audit Strategic Audit Plan have been included in the Committee papers.
- 5.2. The issue relating to subsidized Planetarium employee pension contributions remains to be resolved.
- 5.3. As noted earlier in the meeting it is important that the Observatory and Planetarium Strategic Plans are completed at the earliest opportunity.
- 5.4. Members of the ARMC did not agree with the high risk rating of the payroll system in the Strategic Internal Audit Plan because the opportunities to get things significantly wrong in payroll were very small. This will be discussed with the Internal Auditors when the audit for 2009/2010 is completed.
- 5.5. Members of the ARMC were concerned about the level of bureaucracy placed on the organization by the DCAL and the effect that this is having not only on the work of the individuals concerned but also on their health. This will be a particular concern when it comes to recruiting a Director in the future who will be willing to take this burden on as well as the other duties of the post. It is pleasing that DCAL recognize the problem and hopefully the Department will soon be in a position to reduce the level of bureaucracy. Members of the ARMC also recommended that the organization adopt a proportionate response to future requests for information not fully relevant to the functions of the organization.
- 5.6. In order to ensure full transparency issues such as potential conflicts of interest, single action tenders above £5k, the Directors' expenses and hospitality registers will be considered at future ARMC meetings.

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6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1. Mrs Hogg informed the Committee that this was the last meeting she would attend as a DCAL representative. Mrs Hogg expressed her thanks to the members of the Committee, the Directors and the Committee Secretary for their help and courtesy during her term of office and noted in particular that her abiding memory will be the survival of the Planetarium after a prolonged period of closure. The Acting Chairman thanked Mrs Hogg for her work as a member of the Committee and on other committees in the organization.
- 6.2. Dr Mason informed the Committee that Rosalie Flanagan had replaced Paul Sweeney as DCAL Permanent Secretary.
- 6.3. Dr Oudmaijer informed the Committee that Professor John Dyson, a former member of the Board of Governors and the Management Committee, had passed away. It was agreed that a letter of condolence should be sent to his widow

7. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting will be on 21 June 2010 starting at 10.30 am.

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm.

Signed as a true record of the Meeting

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His Grace, The Most Reverend A E T Harper OBE BA
Chairman of the Management Committee

Dated: 21 June 2010