

**MINUTES OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH AND SIXTH MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE ARMAGH OBSERVATORY AND PLANETARIUM HELD ON 21 JUNE 2018 AT 11.00 A.M. IN THE KEPLER ROOM**

**Present:** Mr J Briggs (Chair), Mr S Brown, Mr B Hannam, Professor R Oudmaijer, Mrs P Wilson, Professor L Harra, Dr M McKay, Professor M Mathioudakis

**Apologies:** Professor M Merrifield, Canon Hilliard, Professor T Ray

**In attendance:** Professor M Burton (AOP Director), Mrs C Corvan (AOP Head of Corporate Services), Professor G Doyle (Acting Head of Observatory), Mrs D Neill (AOP Operations Manager), Dr Marc Sarzi, Mrs L Kennedy, Department for Communities (DfC)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were recorded as above. The Chair welcomed Mrs Kennedy to the meeting and Dr Marc Sarzi, who will take up appointment as Head of Research on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018. The Chair noted that this would be Professor Doyle's last meeting as Acting Head of the Observatory and thanked him for taking on this role over the last 2 years. Professor Oudmaijer was welcomed to the meeting via video link.

The Chair congratulated Mr Brown on recently being awarded a CBE.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair reminded members and officers of the need to declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest associated with any item on the Agenda either now or at the relevant stage during the meeting.

Mr Hannam declared that the Strategic Investment Board (SIB), of which he is a member, had done work for the Observatory, referred to in the Director's Report. No other conflicts of interest were declared.

**3. MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 MARCH 2018**

The minutes of the meeting of 26 March 2018 were reviewed, approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

**4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Dr McKay advised that in relation to the first matter arising, that he had been unable to progress this matter due to a staff member being on exceptional leave. Dr McKay will ensure this matter is taken forward before his retirement.

The Committee approved the items marked as completed and proposed for closure.

## **5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

- 5.1 The Chair reported on paper 3 in relation to the terms of office. Mrs Wilson informed the Committee that she would like to step down effective from today. The Chair thanked Mrs Wilson for her 10 year membership and input and Mrs Wilson commented that she had enjoyed contributing to the work of AOP. Dr McKay expressed concern about waiting until September for a decision about the possibility of extending terms as this may leave the Committee with a number of vacancies. The Chair advised he would discuss this with DfC. **Action MC 21/06/2018-01 – Chair and Mrs Kennedy to discuss timing of confirmation of term extensions.**
- 5.2 The Chair reported that he and Professor Burton had been invited to a meeting of Chairs and Chief Executives of DfC Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June and that he had attended to represent AOP. The Chair summarised DfC position that further cuts over the next few years are to be expected and the organisation needed to prepare for that. The Chair also informed the Committee that along with Professor Burton and Mrs Corvan he met with the Chief Executive of Armagh Banbridge and Craigavon Council and his senior team. There were a number of potential joint projects over the next 5 years and the Chair hoped that a new partnership could be developed which would benefit AOP, Armagh and the region.
- 5.3 The Chair informed the Committee that subject to business requirements, he intended for meetings to finish by 1pm. This would enable training, presentations or informal meetings to take place after lunchtime, such as looking at the grounds or other project works to benefit from a fuller understanding of work in the organisation. Mr Brown welcomed this plan.

## **6 REPORT FROM DIRECTOR**

- 6.1 Professor Burton referred the Committee to his report and a number of discussions around the issues for attention ensued.
- 6.2 Following an update on the budgetary situation and in particular the need for cutbacks, the Committee queried the outcome for DfC following an easement in budget positions a few months ago. It was noted during the discussion that DfC did not benefit from the easement and was in fact down by 1.6%. Mrs Corvan advised that AOP would look at other ways to be self-sustaining. In respect of the repairs to be done to the Observatory Mrs Wilson suggested that as Historic Environment was now part of DfC that AOP should speak to this Department before carrying out any work. Mrs Corvan reassured the Committee that she had met with the capital team on a number of occasions and would ensure AOP had the correct specialist help.
- 6.3 Professor Burton reported on the Strategic Outline Case and explained that AOP was at the first stage of a lengthy process. There would need to be a Steering and Working Group to ensure proper project management. The SOC would be brought forward in future meetings. The Chair commented that this was very positive and advised that the objective was to move to an outline business case. Dr McKay welcomed the longer term vision approach and encouraged AOP to keep moving forward with momentum.
- 6.4 Following the departure of the temporary Head of Education and Community Outreach, AOP intended to proceed with an interim post of Facilities Manager on a fixed term basis. It was anticipated that the process to get the post JEGS evaluated and approved would mean that the recruitment process was unlikely to commence before the Autumn.

- 6.5 In response to the update on progress on ICT matters, Professor Oudmaijer raised a concern in relation to the sudden departure of the ICT Systems Manager. Professor Burton referred to his report on emerging and contingency issues. He indicated that the ICT Manager had left before the end of his notice but that he did not consider it appropriate to discuss the detail of personnel matters. Professor Burton assured the Committee he was confident that the current strategy being progressed was reducing the risk of system failure and is much more robust than a few months ago. Mr Brown enquired if AOP IT security was accredited. Mrs Corvan stated that while compliant, AOP wasn't formally accredited but AOP had been provided with a contact in the Department and would follow up on this. Professor Burton informed the Committee that the website was the one major piece of work outstanding, but this was beyond current resources. Mrs Wilson expressed her thanks and appreciation for the work that had been done in this area to date and members of the Committee concurred with these comments.
- 6.6 Professor Burton sought the Committee's opinions on the request from the IAU Centenary Program to provide a contribution. Following an in depth discussion, the Chair summarised that in order to make a decision the Committee needed to be advised on the benefits of sponsorship and possible negative impacts of not contributing. **Action MC 21/06/2018-02 – Professor Burton to provide additional information to the Committee in September 2018.**
- 6.7 Professor Burton summarised the matters for information and the Committee noted the success of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and welcomed the information in relation to the contribution made by AOP to the AS-level Physics syllabus.
- 6.8 In response to the operational matters discussed, there was a lengthy discussion about the options for the café. It was agreed that an operational café is vital for the Planetarium and management should continue to explore options to secure this.
- 6.9 Dr McKay enquired as to the strategy in terms of producing shows. Professor Burton advised that additional skill sets were needed to tailor shows.
- 6.10 The Committee was informed that the decrease in land valuation was due to an error in previous valuations.

## **7.0 UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (ARAC)**

- 7.1 Mr Hannam informed the Committee that the ARAC considered 3 substantive issues: Internal Audit reports, External Audit update and the Risk Register.
- 7.2 Mr Hannam advised that Internal Audit had provided a report on Fixed Assets which provided a Limited assurance rating. There were two priority 1 recommendations and one priority 3. Mr Hannam advised that the recommendations had been broadly addressed and any remaining work would be completed.
- 7.3 Mr Hannam reported that Internal Audit noted very good progress in addressing the recommendations for the current year and a very large number of outstanding recommendations from previous years had been addressed. The trajectory was very encouraging and positive. The Audit Plan for 2018/19 included safeguarding, procurement, GDPR and outstanding recommendations.
- 7.4 Mr Hannam reported that the external auditors had advised that the 2016/17 Annual Report and Accounts were almost complete. Fieldwork for the 2017/18 report had not yet started, but it was hoped that both reports would be available to the September Committee meeting. The Northern Ireland Audit Office indicated that subject to satisfactory disclosure information from AOP, they would not need to issue another report. AOP would then be back on track.

7.6 Finally, Mr Hannam stated that ARAC had reviewed and were content with the reformatted risk register which now reflected the Corporate Plan and actions being taken to mitigate the identified risks.

7.6 The Chair asked if the Committee was content to approve the risk register and the Committee confirmed approval.

## 8 UPDATE FROM THE STAFFING POLICY AND REMUNERATION COMMITTEE (SPRC)

8.1 Mr Brown advised that the SPRC had completed Professor Burton's appraisal. There had also been a discussion in relation to the grading of posts and leave carry over. Mrs Corvan advised that there was work ongoing with Terms & Conditions and negotiations with the Trade Union. The 2016/17 pay remit has been paid and the pay remit for 2017/18 was being considered. Mrs Corvan informed the Committee that consideration was being given to recruiting for a permanent Operations Manager as the post was being temporarily filled via the Interchange programme.

## 9 BUSINESS PLAN FOR 2018/19 UPDATE

9.1 Mrs Corvan informed the Committee that following the last Management Committee meeting, AOP had taken on board members' comments and sent these to DfC. The Committee was provided with an updated version and advised that this was still a work in progress. The final version would be brought to the September Committee. **Action: MC 21/06/2018-03 Mrs Corvan to bring final Business Plan to September Committee**

9.2 The Chair thanked Mrs Corvan and DfC for the work on this Plan.

## 10 AOB

10.1 Mrs Corvan informed the Committee that training was planned for new and existing Committee members and details would be sent. **Action: MC 21/06/2018-04 Mrs Corvan to send training details to members.**

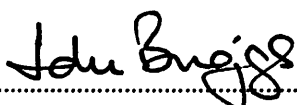
10.2 Dr McKay expressed his personal thanks to Primrose for her work on both this and other committees.

*The meeting finished at 12.55*

## 13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

*Signed as a true record of the meeting*



(Chair)

Dated:

15th Sept 2018

## Updated Actions as at 15 June 2018

Reference	Action	Owner	Progress
MC29/01/15 - 01	Dr McKay to explore within ESA if exhibits could be provided to the Planetarium	Dr McKay	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>17 November 2017</b> Continuing to explore opportunities with Dr McKay</p> <p><b>1 September 2017</b> Dr McKay advised that he will introduce Mr News to the ESA PR.</p> <p><b>23 August 2017</b> John News has been appointed as temporary HECO and will pursue this matter with Dr McKay</p> <p><b>29 March 2017:</b> It is hoped that a temporary Head of Education &amp; Outreach will be appointed shortly and this matter will be pursued at this time.</p> <p><b>20 September 2016:</b> Dr McKay has spoken to ESA PR in HQ (Paris). ESA would like to understand the direction AOP intends to follow and what support they could provide. It has been decided to wait until the new Head of Education &amp; Outreach is appointed before pursuing further.</p> <p><b>28 January 2016:</b> Dr McKay to introduce Planetarium representative to the ESA teams to pursue potential exhibits.</p>
MC26/03/18-01	Mrs Corvan to confirm there was a record of the press release approval by the Management Committee in September 2017	Mrs Corvan	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>The proposed press statement was circulated in hard copy at the ARAC meeting on 1 September 2017 and this was recorded in the minutes. It was then subsequently agreed with DfC Press Office to hold on file should a press enquiry be received. When we were contacted by the Press Association in early March 2018 this was reissued for members' information.</p>
MC26/03/18-02	Mrs Corvan to confirm membership terms and the process for term extensions.	Mrs Corvan	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Paper presented to the June 2018 Management Committee</p>
MC26/03/18-03	The Chair will follow up on the Management Committee vacancies.	Chair	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Chair to update June 2018 Management Committee</p>
MC26/03/18-04	Mrs Corvan to amend objective and circulate to members.	Mrs Corvan	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Updated Business Plan circulated for approval at June 2018 meeting.</p>
MC26/03/18-05	Mrs Corvan to split KPI 21.	Mrs Corvan	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Updated Business Plan circulated for approval at June 2018 meeting.</p>
MC26/03/18-06	Professor Burton to amend KPI 5.	Professor Burton	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Updated Business Plan circulated for approval at June 2018 meeting.</p>
MC26/03/18-07	Mrs Corvan to amend KPI 17.	Mrs Corvan	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Updated Business Plan circulated for approval at June 2018 meeting.</p>
MC26/03/18-08	Mrs Corvan to circulate the updated Business Plan to the	Mrs Corvan	<p><b>Propose to Close</b></p> <p>Updated Business Plan circulated for approval at June 2018 meeting.</p>

	members before submission to DfC.		
MC26/03/18-09	Mrs Corvan to contact Departmental IT Officer.	Mrs Corvan	<b>Ongoing</b> <b>15 June 2018</b> - IT Manager to progress
MC26/03/18-10	Professor Burton to investigate an honorary professorship for the new Head of Research.	Professor Burton	<b>Ongoing</b> <b>13 June 2018</b> Professor Mathioudakis is investigating options with Queen's University.