



Minutes of the Council meeting held at MacNeice House, Belfast

Wednesday 11 June 2008 at 5.00pm

PRESENT

Rosemary Kelly (Chairman), Eithne Benson, Kate Bond, Damien Coyle (Vice Chairman), Raymond Fullerton, David Irvine, Tony Kennedy, Bill Montgomery, Sharon O'Connor, Paul Seawright, Brian Sore, Peter Spratt, Janine Walker

IN ATTENDANCE

Roisin McDonough (Chief Executive)
Paul Burns (Director of Corporate Services)
Nick Livingston (Director of Strategic Development)
Lorraine McDowell (Director of Operations)
Noirin McKinney (Director of Arts Development)
Claire Robinson (Executive Assistant to the Council)

APOLOGIES

Ian Montgomery, Joe Rice and Philip Hammond (Director of Arts Support)

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – 15 May 2008*

The minute of 15 May 2008 was accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting and was signed by the Chairman.

2 MATTERS ARISING

It was confirmed that the request by Tony Kennedy for a long term review of the organisation's current accommodation had been noted in the minute under Item 10 Any Other Business.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Paul Seawright declared an interest in relation to application ACNI/2947.

4 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

4.1 Chairman's Report

The Chairman referred to the recent announcement of a new Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure and indicated that she had already written to Alderman Gregory Campbell MP MLA congratulating him on his appointment and inviting him to visit the Arts Council at Mac Niece House. She also updated Council on a governance and accountability meeting which she and the Chief Executive had attended with Minister Poots.

She confirmed that Council member appraisals had been completed and asked members to sign off the documents before they were sent to DCAL on Monday 16 June 2008.

Since the last meeting the Chairman had spoken at the opening of the Braid Arts Centre in Ballymena and at the celebration evening for the Start-Up Initiative at Burnavon Arts Centre in Cookstown. The Chairman commended Anne Ward and Sonia Whitefield for their work in engaging and developing relationships with the groups involved in the Start-Up programme.

The Chairman had also attended a Ulster Orchestra concert with Barry Douglas at the Waterfront Hall, the Young at Arts Children's Festival at the Waterworks Park and the corporate evening to launch the Final Year Arts Show at the University of Ulster. In addition, she had joined colleagues from the Chairs' Forum North and South at a dinner hosted by President Mary MacAleese and her husband, at Áras an Uachtaráin, Dublin.

The Chairman had participated in discussions on the content and format of future capital project reports along with Kate Bond, Brian Sore, Tony Kennedy, Lorraine McDowell, Director of Operations and Lorraine Calderwood, Capital Projects Officer. It had been agreed that Lorraine Calderwood would devise a draft document for consideration by those in attendance at the meeting prior to being brought to Council for approval.

Council's attention was drawn to an invitation from the BBC Audience Council for Northern Ireland, to attend a consultation on the "BBC's coverage of the Arts in Northern Ireland" to be held on 24 June 2008. The Chairman indicated that work in this area had been ongoing and response to her letter to clients encouraging participation at such events, earlier in the year, had been positive. She asked Council members to attend and to encourage others to attend also.

The Chairman requested that Council member's respond to a request for authorisation to pay expenses through BACS.

4.2 Meetings and Events to 9 July 2008*

The Chairman referred Council to the meeting dates listed, Council's Private Session on 17 June 2008 and Chairs' Committee on 9 July 2008. She also advised that an Acquisitions Committee meeting had since been scheduled for 20 June 2008.

4.3 Attendance Record*

The attendance records were noted.

4.4 ACNI Board's Annual Work Plan 2007/08*

The work plan was noted.

4.5 Complaints and Reviews Update*

No complaints and reviews had been received since the last Council meeting.

4.6 Freedom of Information (Fol) Update*

Two Fol requests had been received. The Director of Operations, Lorraine McDowell advised Council that the information requested by the Irish News was not held by the organisation and that further information relating to the request by Daniel Jewesbury would be supplied.

4.7 Action List arising from Council meeting of 15 May 2008*

The action list was noted as up to date. The Chief Executive said that an update on Youth Lyric would be brought to Council's July meeting.

4.8 Register of Hospitality and Events*

Council members were asked to continue to provide details of attendance at relevant arts events for the register.

4.9 Chairman's Priorities

The Chairman highlighted items prioritised for discussion. She also noted that time had been set aside for discussion with the Permanent Secretary, Paul Sweeney and Director of Arts & Culture, Linda Wilson. In response to a query regarding a DCAL circular 'Forecasting

Capabilities', the Chairman said the document had been tabled for information but could be raised with the Permanent Secretary.

As the meeting was ahead of schedule Council agreed to continue with the Chief Executive's report until the representatives from Belfast Festival at Queens arrived.

6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT *

6.1 FOI Exemption Section 43: Commercial Interest

6.2 FOI Exemption Section 43: Commercial Interest

5 PRESENTATION – Belfast Festival at Queens (BFQ)

The Chairman welcomed James O'Kane, Chairman Culture & Arts Committee & Festival Advisory Board and Graham Farrow, Chief Executive to the meeting.

James O'Kane thanked Council for the opportunity to make a presentation on the Ulster Bank Belfast Festival at Queen's. He referred to BFQ's relationship with the arts in Northern Ireland and its success in improving international profile during the past 25 years. He accepted the importance of sustainability noting the importance of building partnerships with existing funding bodies and securing additional investment. He said that the Festival had been given the opportunity to make itself sustainable and they would make use of the next three years to accomplish this.

Graham Farrow introduced the new logo for the festival and outlined the investment being made by Ulster Bank. He presented the vision, mission, and strategic aims and discussed the financial and developmental targets for the festival. A summary of the 2008/09 budget, highlights of forthcoming events and future challenges/opportunities were provided. He concluded by emphasising the importance of the relationship with ACNI and the opportunity to work positively over the next three years to promote the value of arts and to create a sustainable festival of international standing.

In response to questions from Council members it was confirmed that the Festival would welcome working with other local Councils and that, although alternative ways of increasing Belfast City Council's input into the festival had been considered, the Festival was tied to its current 3 year funding programme. It was also verified that Ulster Bank funding was not conditional on achievement of targets and that future programming for the festival was considered ambitious. Graham Farrow clarified that a strategy for securing private investment was in place and that the process had been streamlined and was now undertaken by a dedicated team within the university.

The Chairman thanked James O'Kane and Graham Farrow for the presentation and commended the team on securing the support of Ulster Bank. She said the Arts Council was keen to work with and support the Festival. She also complimented the 2007/08 Festival and said she personally looked forward to enjoying events planned for 2008/09.

James O'Kane and Graham Farrow left the meeting.

Council commented on the level of funding allocated by the university, the need to identify and monitor funding from other sponsors and the possibility of a tripartite strategic partnership between BFQ, Ulster Bank, and Belfast City Council.

Bill Montgomery joined the meeting.

6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT Contd*

6.3 Re-Imaging Communities

Council was advised that, due to the success of the programme, most of the original budget had been allocated and the programme had been temporarily suspended whilst additional resources were secured. The Chief Executive referred to the evaluation of the programme (appendix 3) which summarised findings to date. A powerpoint presentation of images

contained within the briefing document was displayed. A clearer copy of the images would be made available to Council members if requested.

Council commended the success of the programme and asked that congratulations be extended to all involved. They discussed the distribution of awards throughout Northern Ireland and were assured that work to secure applications from areas not currently represented would continue.

6.4 Creativity Seed Fund

The Chief Executive provided an update on progress and Council noted the Terms of Reference circulated as appendix 4.

6.5 CAL Committee

Council was advised of the CAL committee's intention to undertake an inquiry into the Arts and noted that no formal terms of reference had yet been set. The Chief Executive and the Chairman had discussed how to engage with the committee and would be meeting with the Chair and Deputy Chair in the near future.

Peter Spratt joined the meeting.

6.6 Staffing/Recruitment Update

With regard to the recent recruitment exercise the Chief Executive confirmed that Fiona MacMillan had been appointed as the Public Affairs Officer and Kate Keys as the Business Development Manager.

Shortlisting for a curator for the Venice Biennale had taken place and Council would be kept informed of the outcome of interviews being held at the end of the week.

6.7 Meetings & Events

The meetings and events attended by the Chief Executive since the last meeting were noted.

7 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

7.1 Lottery Applications*

Council noted that the Lottery, Grants and Capital Committee (LGC) had considered Lottery applications at its meeting on the 9 June 2008. Five applications had been circulated to Council for consideration and the recommendation of the Committee was noted.

Council accepted the recommendation of the LGC Committee and approved the applications noted below.

ACNI/3065	Ulster Orchestra Society	£86,860
ACNI/3054	Belfast Festival @ Queens	£100,000
ACNI/3006	Sticky Fingers Early Years Art	£78,500
ACNI/3082	New Lodge Arts	£76,583
ACNI/3048	Digital Arts Studios	£57,387

Paul Seawright left the meeting during discussion on application ACNI/2947. Lorraine McDowell, Director of Operations, clarified information relevant to the application which had not been available at moderation. Council discussed the application in light of the additional information and approved funding.

Council approved funding for:

ACNI/2947	Royal Ulster Academy	£19,600
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Paul Seawright rejoined the meeting.

7.2 Awards for All (AfA)*

Council was advised that the Lottery, Grants and Capital Committee had considered the proposal for Awards for All as outlined in the paper circulated. No issues arose regarding the document circulated.

8 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & NOTING

8.1 Delegated Decisions*

The delegated decisions for Project Funding and Public Arts were noted by Council.

8.2 Capital Projects Report*

The Chairman reiterated that a meeting to discuss the format and content of future capital reports had been held. The Capital Projects Officer, Lorraine Calderwood would produce a report in a new format which would be circulated to Council on a regular basis.

8.3 Final Exchequer Accounts 2007/08*

Council was advised that the final accounts had been completed and reviewed by NIAO and had received a clean audit. The Audit Committee had considered the report at its meeting on 9 June 2008. Tony Kennedy, Committee Chairman commended the Finance Manager for completing the accounts within the tight timeframe set, in order to facilitate the accounts being laid before the Assembly's summer recess. However, he pointed out that this had been delayed by the Comptroller and Auditor General's decision not to sign off accounts until issues regarding back pay for lower paid workers had been clarified. Guidance on this would be sought from DCAL.

Council noted a substantial increase in reserves and accepted that an explanatory comment would be included in the report. A correction to the amount of funding received for Cultural Traditions programme was highlighted for information and a query was raised regarding the list of declared interests for the period. The Chairman asked Council members to check the list of declared interests and notify the executive assistant of any changes required. She also requested that the order of the Chairman's and Chief Executive's introduction be rearranged.

The Chairman asked for clarification on the process of reporting on final accounts to Council. It was her understanding that Council should have the opportunity to make comment on and approve the accounts before this stage. Paul Burns, Director of Corporate Services acknowledged that this would normally be the case but the timescale for completing the accounts, carrying out the audit and finalising the report had been particularly tight on this occasion.

8.4 Legacy Trust*

In the absence of the Director of Arts Support, Philip Hammond, Lorraine McDowell, Director of Operations outlined the content of the paper circulated. She told Council that the scheme was now open for application and details were available on the website. The applications received would be assessed by ACNI and would then go to the UK Legacy Trust for decision. The Arts Council would be responsible for administering the scheme on behalf of the UK Legacy Trust. Council accepted the paper.

8.5 Communications Report*

Council noted the circulated communications report and Noirin McKinney, Director of Arts Development offered to satisfy any queries.

In response to the Chairman's request for an update on a response from the Pride of Ardoyne Band, Lorraine McDowell, Director of Operations said that she had been unable to contact the band for comment on the newspaper article. She clarified that funding had ceased over a year ago.

Noirin McKinney, Director of Arts Development confirmed that the copy of the media audit previously requested by Peter Spratt had been emailed to him by the Communications Manager, Grainne McCann. She agreed to circulate the report to all Council members.

8.6 Artform & Specialist Reports*

The reports circulated were noted. Professor Ian Montgomery had facilitated a further contact with Invest NI and Dr Suzanne Lyle had recently made renewed contact regarding exhibiting work from the Collection. The Chairman referred to the new works purchased and asked for an arrangement to enable Council to see the new items.

The Chief Executive outlined the situation regarding the jointly funded literature/language posts. Council supported the Chief Executive on her proposals.

9 COMMITTEES

9.1 Audit Committee

Tony Kennedy, Committee Chairman indicated that items discussed by the Committee had been dealt with earlier in the meeting. He welcomed David Irvine's expertise as a new member of the Audit Committee. It appeared there was a possibility of losing the two co-opted members.

9.2 LGC Committee

An update of the business addressed on the 9 June 2008 was provided by Eithne Benson who had chaired the meeting in the absence of Kate Bond. The Committee had made recommendations on Lottery applications and the Awards for All programme which had been considered by Council earlier in the meeting. She highlighted recurring issues which had arisen during discussion of Lottery applications and the need for equity of scoring and assessment. The Committee had requested additional information that would assist with the decision making process and accepted the Executive's proposal that a summary of comments from moderation would accompany applications in the future.

9.3 Remuneration & Staffing Committee

Details of matters discussed at the Committee meeting had been provided earlier in the meeting.

Confirmed minutes of meetings of the audit (21/4/08), LGC (19/2/08) and Remuneration & Staffing (4/4/08) Committees were tabled at the meeting.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Permanent Secretary and Director of Arts & Culture

Paul Sweeney and Linda Wilson joined the meeting. The Chairman welcomed the Permanent Secretary and the Director of Arts & Culture and Council members were introduced.

The Chairman warmly welcomed them to the meeting and thanked them for making time to attend.

Tony Kennedy voiced his concern with the content of a circular 'Forecasting Capabilities' which had been forwarded to Audit Committee Chairmen from DCAL's Director of Finance and asked the Permanent Secretary for his comments on the document. In addition, he raised the issue of ambiguity around roles and responsibilities for the management of capital projects in the future.

The Permanent Secretary thanked Council for the invitation to join the meeting and noted that this was the first opportunity he and the Director of Arts & Culture had had to meet with the entire Board. He offered his congratulations to the Arts Council and the Board for its input and support of the Smithsonian event, its leadership role in the Comprehensive Spending Review and its performance against spend profile and financial forecasting. He stated that continued lobbying for additional funding for the arts would be essential and acknowledged that the Arts Council's efforts in this area had been impressive and would continue to be so in the future. He noted the letter circulated to Audit Committee Chairs and said he would not comment as he was not aware of the content of the document. With regard to the roles and responsibilities and the processes for management of capital projects he noted concerns raised and said it was important for all involved to work together to establish clarity. Details of specific concerns would be identified and filtered back to DCAL.

Linda Wilson thanked Council for the invitation. She said that in the short time in post she had already been working closely with the Executive and was looking forward to building a strong relationship. She commended the Arts Council on its campaign for the Arts which she had observed from a different perspective before moving to DCAL.

The Chairman expressed appreciation that Paul Sweeney and Linda Wilson had taken the time out of very busy schedules to join Council. She thanked Paul Sweeney for his comments and reassurance that DCAL would work with the Arts Council in sorting out the capital project issues.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of Council was confirmed as **Wednesday 9 July 2008**. The meeting would be held at MacNeice House at 5pm.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

RESERVED MATTERS:

FOI Exemption Section 43:

Commercial Interest

Items 6.1 & 6.2, pg 3; Item 7.2, pg 5;

FOI Exemption Section 22

Information intended for future publication

Item 6.6, pg 4

Signed: _____
Rosemary Kelly
(Chairman)

Date: _____
9 July 2008