

Minutes of the meeting of the Toscaireacht

Date 17 September 2009

Time 1pm

Venue No 70 Merrion Sq

Present

Seóirse Bodley, Dermot Healy, Eibhlís Farrell, Mary FitzGerald, Mannix Flynn, Alice Hanratty, Macdara Woods

In attendance

Toby Dennett (Registrar) and Katie Lowry (International Arts and Artists' Supports Officer)

Papers before the meeting

Agenda

- Election of Chair
- Apologies
- Previous Minutes and Matters Arising
- Update on Election of New Toscaireacht
- New Members Nomination and Election Process
- Recent correspondence sent to Aosdána
 - From John Lawlor
 - From Campaign for the Arts
 - Vincent McCabe
- AOB

1. Election of Chair

Seoirse Bodley was elected to chair the meeting

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from Anthony Cronin and Samuel Walsh

3. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.

4. Update on Election of New Toscaireacht

Registrar updated the Toscaireacht on the status of the election.

5. New Members Nomination and Election Process

The registrar drew members attention to the proposed schedule for the new member nomination and election process. The members approved the schedule.

A member noted that they felt it was wrong for any one Aosdána member to nominate or second multiple artists for election as it weakened the case of the nominated artists. The registrar confirmed that there was no rule to prevent members from nominating or seconding more than 1 artist.

There was a discussion regarding the nomination process for architecture and choreography disciplines. It was noted that the issue discussed at the previous meeting regarding the possibility of changing the nomination and election procedure for artists from these disciplines would have to be revisited at a future meeting.

The registrar confirmed that changes in the nomination/election rules can only take place at a General Assembly.

The Registrar confirmed that there were 10 places available for new members at the next General Assembly in addition to any places that may be made available by the death of an existing member. It was confirmed that if all available places were filled at the next General Assembly that this would bring the membership up to its limit of 250 members.

6. Recent correspondence

The Registrar drew the attention of the Toscaireacht to a letter received from John Lawlor requesting that Aosdána take action in response to the McCarthy report. The Toscaireacht agreed that the sentiments expressed in the letter were valid and important. The Toscaireacht requested that a response be issued stating that the Toscaireacht welcomed his letter and stating that it shared his concerns regarding potential cuts to the arts in the upcoming budget and that the Toscaireacht were formulating a strategy to address this concern.

The Registrar drew the attention of the Toscaireacht to a letter received from Tania Banotti seeking the support of Aosdána for the *National Campaign for the Arts*. There were concerns expressed around the lack of information provided and the origins and intentions of the campaign. The Toscaireacht agreed that Aosdána could not endorse the campaign as it would have had to have been put before a General Assembly. It was agreed that the request should be distributed to individual members.

The Registrar drew the attention of the Toscaireacht to a letter received from Vincent McCabe, which he had requested be sent to all Aosdána members. In the letter Vincent McCabe informs members of his initiative to establish an honours system for interpretive and performing artists and invites members to participate in a consultative process. The Registrar informed members that the letter had not been distributed to members because it contained the line '*a letter of endorsement from Aosdána is pending*'. The Toscaireacht agreed that it welcomed the initiative. However it was agreed that Aosdána as a body was not in a position to endorse the initiative as it had not been voted on at a General Assembly. It was agreed that Mr McCabe should be informed that the Toscaireacht welcomed his initiative and that he should be invited to resubmit his letter for distribution to members and that the covering email to members inform them that the Toscaireacht welcomed his initiative.

7. AOB

Aosdána making the case for the arts.

The Toscaireacht agreed that it would be important for it to initiate some action in regard to the McCarthy report, the Commission on Taxation and the impending cuts in public expenditure on the arts. It was noted that the benefit of all the work which members had

put into building up the arts in Ireland over several decades could potentially be wiped out in the next budget.

It was agreed that a meeting between the Saoi and the Minister for Art, Sports and Tourism would be the most appropriate way for Aosdána to make the case for the value of the arts and for the retention of appropriate government supports for the arts.

It was agreed that an approach should be made to the Saoi asking them if they would be willing to meet with the minister. If support were forthcoming it was agreed that the minister should be invited to meet the Saoi rather than Aosdána asking for an audience with the Minister.

The Toscaireacht agreed on the wording of a letter to be sent to the Saoi. It was agreed that the Toscaireacht would meet again in early October to discuss the response and to make arrangements for the meeting between the Saoi and the Minister.

ENDS