

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Toscaireacht**

**Date** 3 June 2010

**Time** 1pm

**Venue** No 70 Merrion Sq

### **Present**

Mannix Flynn, Macdara Woods, Nick Miller, Brian Maguire, Theo Dorgan, Hugh Maxton, Jane O'Leary

### **In attendance**

Mary Cloak (Director, Arts Council), Toby Dennett (Registrar) and Niamh McCabe (International Arts and Artists' Supports Officer)

### **Agenda**

1. Election of Chair
2. Apologies
3. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising
4. General Assembly – update and issues arising
5. General Assembly - follow up to motions
  - Tax Exemption
  - Farcry Productions and Dunamaisé
  - Residential Redress Act
  - Arts Council and 'Partnership for the Arts'
  - Vanbrugh Quartet
  - Meeting between Saoi, Taoiseach and Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport.
6. Toscaireacht work plan
7. A.O.B.

### **Address by Mary Cloake**

Mary Cloake thanked the Toscaireacht for the opportunity to address the meeting. The Director highlighted the reduced resources within the Arts Council drawing attention to the effect of the moratorium on recruitment in the public service. She advised that the number of sanctioned posts in the Arts Council had reduced from 63 to 49 and that this could impact upon the ability of the Arts Council to provide administrative resources to Aosdána at the level which currently exists. The Director confirmed that the Arts Council was committed to supporting the core functions of Aosdána but urged that the Toscaireacht consider what level of Arts Council administrative support it felt would be essential for its core business and what aspects of its work may be undertaken independently.

The Toscaireacht agreed to bear in mind the comments made by the Director when planning their future activities.

The Toscaireacht thanked Mary Cloake for taking the time to address them in person.

### **1. Election of Chair**

Brian Maguire was elected to chair the meeting.

### **2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted from Anthony Cronin, Seoirse Bodley and Dermot Healy.

### **3. Previous Minutes**

The Chair asked the Toscaireacht to consider the minutes of the meeting of the 18 March 2010. It was agreed to amend item 4 of the minutes of the meeting to reflect that the Toscaireacht agreed to '*examine the current categories of discipline*'

Taking into account the agreed amendment it was agreed that the minutes represented an accurate record of the meeting.

There were no matters arising.

#### **4. General Assembly – update and issues arising**

The registrar reported the following:

- That a press release detailing the election of new members and motions passed had been distributed on the day following the General Assembly.
- That the press release did not include mention of the motion referring to the Saoi as this was a private matter for Aosdána
- That all nominees and nominators had been contacted regarding the outcome of the new members election.
- That a complaint had been received from Nigel Rolfe concerning the accommodation arrangements for the Assembly
- That a letter had been received from Imogen Stuart enquiring why her previously submitted correspondence about requesting the age of nominated artists had not been put to the assembly as a motion,

The Toscaireacht agreed that Imogen Stuart's correspondence was not presented as a motion. However, members agreed with the sentiment expressed in her letter and suggested that in future nominators should be asked to give the date of birth of artists proposed for membership.

The Toscaireacht commended the speech made, and the role of Anthony Cronin in the day's proceedings and suggested that his commentary on the formation and development of Aosdána be sought and kept on record.

Brian Maguire suggested that in light of the results of the recent ballot that in future members should receive an explanation of how voting works in advance of a ballot.

It was agreed that the issue relating to the proposal by Temple Bar Cultural Trust would be discussed under Toscaireacht Workplan (agenda item 6)

#### **5. General Assembly - follow up to motions**

The registrar reminded members that although a press release had been issued announcing the relevant motions, no other action had been taken in response to any of the motions. The Registrar asked members to consider each motion and decide what further action if any was required.

a) Re: Tax exemption

"Aosdána deplores some of the recent tax exemptions granted to the authors of books and calls for the introduction of new guidelines in accordance with the spirit of the act".

**Proposed: Anthony Cronin**

**Seconded: Mannix Flynn**

The registrar reported that there had been some press coverage on this matter as a result of the motion. After discussion it was agreed that the Registrar should ask the Anthony Cronin (proposer) what further action he thought might be appropriate to take.

b) Re: Farcry Productions and Dunamaise

"That this assembly deplores the act of censorship imposed by the management of the Dunamaise Arts Centre Portlaoise, on Farcry Productions installation of the Visual Art Show, *Padded Cell* and other stories. Further that this assembly finds the support by the Arts Council for such censorship inappropriate and unacceptable."

**Proposed: Nick Miller**

**Seconded: Ulick O'Connor**

In the interests of best practice and to avoid any perceived conflict of interest Mannix Flynn left the room for discussion on this item.

It was noted that Dunamaise Arts Centre had sent correspondence directly to members of the Toscaireacht (although some members had not received anything). The Registrar reminded members of the correspondence that had been received from Aosdána member Donal O'Kelly and of the coverage of the issue that had been published in the press.

Nick Miller stated that he had drafted a response to the Dunamaise letter which he read aloud to the meeting. It was agreed that with some amendments the principles set out in the letter were in line with the membership's vote.

Theo Dorgan stressed the importance of putting in place a mechanism for developing a set of mediation principles, which could bring closure to this if both parties were involved, along with an Arts Council appointed/suggested mediator.

Following a lengthy discussion Theo Dorgan and Brian Maguire agreed to liaise on the writing of a letter to Dunamaise taking on Board the issues discussed and the points raised by members. They also agreed to write a letter the Chair of the Arts Council which would include recommending the drawing up of guidelines for conflict resolution.

It was suggested that perhaps in the future a member of the Toscaireacht should excuse themselves from discussion when he/she wishes to put forward a motion on an issue with which they have a personal connection.

The Registrar asked what response should be given to the correspondence received from Donal O'Kelly. The Toscaireacht agreed not to respond to Donal O'Kelly's letter until such time as they received an outcome to their letters to the Arts Council and Dunamaise Arts Centre.

c) Re: Residential Redress Act

"With reference to sections 7(6) and 34 (detailed below) of the Residential Redress Act 2002, Aosdána calls on the Minister for Justice and/or the Attorney General to confirm that nothing in these sections can or should be constructed in such a way as to inhibit any truthful treatment of the subject, whether factual or fictionalised, in memoirs, novels, short stories, poetry, plays, film-scripts, etc., or in any other art form."

**Proposed: Margaretta D'Arcy**

**Seconded: Paula Meehan**

It was agreed the Registrar would write to the relevant Minister and the Attorney General to inform them of this motion.

d) Re: Arts Council "Partnership for the Arts"

"The General Assembly calls on the Arts Council to reiterate its commitment to transparency, accountability and the central role of the individual artist in relation to its funding disbursements and to abide by the parameters of its policy document 'Partnership for the Arts'."

**Proposed: Theo Dorgan**

**Seconded: Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin**

Theo Dorgan agreed to write to the Arts Council to ask them to reiterate that their decisions are guided by the policy Partnership for the Arts.

e) Re: Vanburgh Quartet

"The General Assembly of Aosdána acknowledges the significant role of the RTE Vanbrough Quartet as quartet in residence in RTE in contributing to the development of music in Ireland. We endorse the support previously expressed by the Toscaireacht and in particular note the importance of the Vanbrugh Quartet's role in commissioning, performing, recording and broadcasting the music of Irish Composers."

**Proposed by: Jane O'Leary**

**Seconded by: Theo Dorgan**

The Registrar agreed to write to RTE regarding the motion which was passed at the general assembly, in relation to the Vanburgh Quartet seeking the re-construction of a relationship between RTE and a chamber ensemble.

f) Re: Meeting between Saoithe, Taoiseach and Minister

"The General Assembly of Aosdána proposes that the Toscaireacht proceed with organising a meeting between the Saoithe and the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, and the Taoiseach on the issue of public support for the Arts"

**Proposed by: Brian Maguire**

**Seconded by: Dermot Healy**

It was agreed that Brian Maguire would write to the Saoi seeking their agreement to a meeting as proposed and would follow up with drafting a letter for the attention of the Minister and Taoiseach.

## **6. Toscaireacht Workplan**

The Registrar reminded members of various issues which the Toscaireacht had proposed to discuss and requested that members identify which key issues they wanted to prioritise for discussion at future meetings.

Following discussion and in light of the address by Arts Council Director Mary Cloake at the beginning of the meeting it was agreed that the Toscaireacht would need to meet on 3 occasions per year which would be facilitated by the Arts Council. The primary purpose of these meetings would be to:

- consider and approve nominations for new members
- consider and approve the agenda and motions and for the General Assembly
- consider actions following the General Assembly

It was agreed that the Toscaireacht would also meet on a further 3 or more occasions per year as necessitated by business. These meetings would be held outside of the Arts Council and would be facilitated by the members. Minutes would be provided to the Registrar.

It was therefore agreed that the next meeting in the Arts Council would need to be in October/November 2010 at which new member nominations would be considered. It was agreed that this meeting would also consider:

- Aosdána pension (some members felt that the current pension arrangement is non-productive and that other alternatives should be examined)
- The new member nomination process and discipline categories

It was agreed that the next meeting facilitated by the Toscaireacht should consider the proposal put to Aosdana by Temple Bar Cultural Trust. It was agreed that Brian Maguire would make contact with TBCT to suggest a meeting.

## **7. AOB**

The Registrar drew members attention to a letter addressed to the Toscaireacht regarding the Bank of Ireland collection. Brian Maguire agreed to write to BOI seeking confirmation on the actions they are currently undertaking regarding the BOI art collection.

The Toscaireacht agreed to send their condolences to Dermot Bolger on the death of his wife

The Toscaireacht also sent their best wishes to Katie Lowry, who is now on maternity leave.

**ENDS**