

Toscaireacht meeting

28th July 2003

The Arts Council, 70 Merrion Square Dublin 2

Present: Alice Hanratty, Eric Sweeney, Michael Kane, Theo Dorgan, Patricia Quinn (Registrar), Paul Johnson (Deputy Registrar).

In attendance: Siân Cunningham, Artists' Services Officer (minutes)

Apologies: Seóirse Bodley, Maud Cotter, Anthony Cronin, Paul Durcan, Brian Maguire, Fergus Johnstone.

The meeting commenced inquorate at 2.45pm.

Eric Sweeney was nominated to chair for this meeting.

Agenda item 1:

Paul Johnson spoke about the new administrative structure in the Arts Council. Paul (Artists' Services Manager) and Siân Cunningham (Artists' Services Officer) are now the main points of contact for Aosdána, as it is now part of the brief of the Artists' Services Department. The Artists' Services Department will administer Cnuas payments and deal with all aspects of Aosdána administration. The Director remains as Registrar for the time being, and will continue to represent Aosdána at Council meetings.

ES asked if the new administrative structure would be outlined to Aosdána members.

PJ will do this in conjunction with the letters of notification regarding the Aosdána nomination process.

ES also requested that PJ clarifies the position regarding the Registrar of Aosdána in this letter.

Theo Dorgan noted that it is positive that the Director remains as the Registrar for the time being.

TD also noted that the most recent minutes of a Toscaireacht meeting available are from November 2002 and requested if it would be possible to bring these up to date over the summer.

Agenda item 2:

Patricia Quinn reported that the Aosdána handbook needs to be finalised. There are no matters of contention arising. The latest draft is the same as the one distributed at the last Toscaireacht meeting. PQ suggested that she would issue a recommendation for the final text within a week of today. She also clarified that

this does not override the decision made about the handbook at the last meeting but is just an elaboration of the decision made at the last meeting.

Agenda item 3:

A question was raised over the purpose of circulating the draft general assembly minutes at this meeting.

- As the General Assembly is quite a large meeting it is not always an appropriate place for redrafting.
- The thrust of the previous meeting is fresher at present rather than waiting until the next General Assembly.

It was agreed that each member would contact Paul Johnson directly with any changes for the minutes.

Alice Hanratty requested that an analysis of minutes of all general assemblies be undertaken.

In response to this request PQ reported that an analysis was undertaken approximately two years ago, in which trends in membership, Cnuas etc were researched.

PQ will re-circulate a copy of this to members.

Agenda item 4:

ES asked when decision on additional places would be made.

PQ - This will be dependent on the new Council. The Toscairí will have to propose the structure and this in turn will go to the Council.

TD asked if there has been any advance on discussions about the Cnuas?

PQ - This will be factored in to the budget proposals. The first meeting of the new Council will be in August. Business meetings will commence in late September/early October. In late October a draft budget will be adopted. Later in the year an agreed budget will be adopted following the publication of the book of estimates. The structure of the Arts Council's budgets has changed over the past few years. There are now 4 main programme areas (Production Companies, Venues, Resource Organisations and Festivals) as well as the six development programmes and the Artists' awards (projects, cnuas etc).

Applications are made to the Arts Council for revenue funding in the autumn. At this point the evidence of demand is available and is discussed. Aosdána would be included in this. PQ reassured the meeting that a strong case is always made to the Council.

TD asked what the basis for an increase in the Cnuas payment would be?

PQ replied that it would be based on the evidence available to the Arts Council.

Sufficient analysis has not yet been undertaken. The Cnuas now has the same value that it held when it started.

TD suggested that the Consumer Price Index could be used as one of the resources but not as the sole measure.

PQ spoke about the aspirations of the Arts Council to commission a follow on report to Anthony Everett's *The Creative Imperative*. There is a list of outstanding research items, which will be part of the agenda for the new Council. The execution of this will depend on the decisions of the Council.

Michael Kane asked that if an analysis of this kind were to go ahead, would a similar analysis be envisaged by the government departments involved in this (Arts, Sports and Tourism, Finance and Social, Community and Family Affairs). MK also commented that it is not possible to compare artists to each other in different disciplines. Expectations of OAP's should also be taken into account.

ES requested that PQ would ask the incoming Council to make this issue a priority.

PQ remarked that the resources have retracted in the Arts Council over the past three years. Funding of the Cnuas has not yet reached a plateau stage.

TD asked how the Council responded to Anthony Cronin's proposal? They agreed with it in principle.

TD requested that the Deputy Registrar put this on the agenda for the next meeting.

AH raised the question of the allocation of extra Aosdána places to Irish language writers. A debate ensued. It was agreed to discuss this issue in more detail at the next meeting.

Agenda item 5:

PJ spoke about the outlined proposal in the agenda.

He explained that currently there are 193 members, which has an impact on the volume of administrative work for the Arts Council executive.

The proposed date for the next General Assembly is based on the last years also having been held at that time. The suggested dates outlined allow the executive to prepare for the General Assembly.

TD requested that the list of nominees on the 3-year revolving system be re-circulated as it would be a useful document to have. PJ agreed to do this.

TD also asked if the nominations of architects and choreographers would come through before 2004.

PQ replied that this was entirely up to the Toscaireacht. It will also depend on the willingness of the new Council to take this on board along with everything else.

Agenda item 6:

PJ provided an update on the court procedures. No decision has yet been taken by the court.

Agenda item 7:

TD requested that a briefing document could be prepared for members regarding pensions. PJ explained that the Arts Council's contact in Marshes has moved on and that no one has been designated to look after yet.

TD also requested some information on other schemes available to Aosdána members (i.e. VHI etc).

A short debate followed around the appropriateness of such schemes for Aosdána members.

PQ – the issue of income tax relief should be discussed. Aosdána should meet with the Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism to discuss this.

TD suggested that such a meeting should go through PJ as Artists' Services Manager.

PQ raised the issue of Brian Maguire's concern regarding the artist in prison scheme. There is a risk of formal censorship on artists working in this area. This is a topic that should be discussed by Aosdána.

PQ also suggested that the information that is available on artist's earnings and the Cnuas should be used to back to an argument to maintain the artists' tax exemption.

Agenda item 8:

The provisional date of Monday October 13th for the next meeting was agreed.

The meeting concluded at 4.10pm

ENDS