Minutes of the meeting of the Toscaireacht

Date 20 August 2008
Time 12pm
Venue No 70 Merrion Sq

Present
Anthony Cronin, Seórse Bodley, Mannix Flynn, Alice Hanratty, Samuel Walsh, Macdara Woods, Dermot Healy.

In attendance
Toby Dennett (Registrar), Mary Cloake (Arts Council Director) for item 6 only, Celina Carey (Artists' Supports Assistant), Katie Lowry (International Arts and Artists' Supports Officer)

1. Election of Chair
Seorise Bodley was elected to chair the meeting

2 Apologies
Apologies from Brian Maguire, Eibhlis Farrell and Mary FitzGerald were noted.

3. Previous Minutes / Matters arising
Mannix Flynn questioned the brevity of the minutes from the previous Toscaireacht meeting, which he felt did not capture the discussion surrounding his resignation. He also expressed his concern at not being able to access notes taken by the minute taker at the last meeting.

The Toscaireacht agreed in principle that minutes for meetings should be kept brief and should record decisions.

The Toscaireacht agreed that the minutes represented a true and accurate record of the decisions taken at the last meeting.

4. Registrar's Report
Items read and noted
- New Staff
- Seórse Bodley elected as Saoi
- Saoi and New Members reception
- Request for meeting from TG4

Further to the meeting request from TG4 the members felt the following response was appropriate:

The Toscaireacht has considered your request and thinks it would be premature to have a meeting until the Arts Council has drawn up proposals on the issue.

5. Post General Assembly Issues

It was agreed that at future General Assemblies candidates should be presented in alphabetical order.

A member expressed concern about an administrative error made during the 2008 election process which led to the wrong nomination letters being distributed for 2 candidates. The Toscaireacht stressed the importance of correct administrative procedures for the nomination and election process. The Registrar acknowledged and apologised for the error. The Registrar distributed a checklist of tasks associated with each stage of the nomination and election process which it was proposed would reduce the risk of similar mistakes occurring during the 2009 nomination and election process.

6. Working Group on Honouring Interpretive and Performing Artists

Mary Cloake joined the meeting. The Registrar reported that, he had distributed a call for expressions of interest to the membership. The Registrar presented a paper that had been distributed in advance that outlined proposals on how an Aosdána working party might be established, how it might work and what issues it might consider. Mary Cloake stressed to the meeting that the Arts Council wanted to fully support Aosdána in its deliberations on the matter.

There was a long discussion with a number of opinions expressed including that:

- it was too early to consider the setting up of a working group
- there seemed to be strong pressure coming from the Arts Council to progress the issue quickly
- Aosdana needed to be the driving force rather than the Arts Council
- there were broader issues that needed to be considered before a working group might be established
- it was not for Aosdána to get involved in how another artists body might be set up and run as this could leave Aosdána open to criticism
- there was no evidence to suggest that interpretative or performing artists wanted to be part of Aosdána
- the invitation to express interest in the working group distributed by the Registrar stated that a working group was to be established so as to consider the Arts Council proposal, however, the general assembly motion implied that it was simply to explore the issue generally of performing artists in Aosdana.
- the call for expressions of interest for the working party was premature and should not have been distributed

After discussion it was decided to schedule a separate Toscaireacht meeting solely to discuss all issues relating to Aosdána and the honouring of interpretive and performing artists. It was agreed to hold this meeting on 29 September 2008.

7. New Members Nomination Process

The Registrar distributed a timetable for nomination process for new members of Aosdána and the Toscaireacht agreed with the proposed timetable.

8. Mannix Flynn resignation

Mannix Flynn expressed his concern that the Arts Council had not distributed to all members of Aosdána a statement he had issued following his resignation.
A resolution was passed by the Toscaireacht as follows:

In case of the resignation of a Toscaireacht Member on a matter or matters of policy, the member is entitled to present his/her position to the Aosdá na membership in writing.

It was agreed that it was important to record the resolution as a statement to the Arts Council for future reference.

9. AOB

It was agreed that Mannix Flynn would receive all copies of press relating to Aosdá na and would respond to any inaccuracies when deemed necessary

It was proposed and agreed that a letter of sympathy should be extended to the family of the late Seamus Brennan, TD on behalf of the Toscaireacht.