

Minutes of the meeting of the Toscaireacht

Date: 5 November 2007

Time: 1.00 pm

Venue: The Arts Council, 70 Merrion Square

Present:

Anthony Cronin Seoirse Bodley, Anthony Cronin, Mannix Flynn, Mary Fitzgerald, Alice Hanratty, Dermot Healy, Brian Maguire, Samuel Walsh, Macdara Woods

In attendance

Toby Dennett (Registrar), Martin Drury (Arts Director), Niamh McCabe (International Arts and Artists' Supports Officer)

Papers before the meeting

Agenda

Minutes of meeting

Agenda

- Apologies and Introductions
- Election of Chair
- Toscaireacht Minutes/Matters Arising
- Cooption of Music Toscaire
- Minutes from General Assembly
- Date for General Assembly
- Nominations for new Members
- Report - Anthony Cronin's meeting with Mary Cloake
- AOB

1. Apologies and Introductions

Toby Dennett extended a warm welcome to the new Toscaireacht members on behalf of the Arts Council and introduced himself as the new Head of Artists' Supports and Registrar of Aosdána. He also introduced Arts Director Martin Drury and Officer Niamh McCabe.

2. Election of Chairperson

Toby Dennett asked for nominations for the position of Chair. Anthony Cronin was nominated and elected as Chair of the meeting (proposed by Alice Hanratty and seconded by Seoirse Bodley). The Registrar suggested that in future it would make sense to elect a Chair at the end of each meeting to take charge of the subsequent meeting.

3. Minutes/Matters Arising

It was noted that Alice Maher was not present at the previous meeting and comments attributed to her should be edited to read Anthony Cronin. Subject to agreed changes, the minutes were adopted as an accurate record of the meeting.

There was a discussion around the new staff structure operating within the Arts Council. Martin Drury and the Registrar provided some explanations and a context for the new structure. Mannix Flynn asked for clarification of roles/jobs/responsibilities etc. to be communicated to the members of the Toscaireacht in advance of the next meeting. The Registrar confirmed that this would be provided.

4. Co-option of music Toscaire:

It was reported by the Registrar that there was a vacant place on the Toscaireacht that needed to be filled by a composer. It was noted that after correspondence with Music members that 2 composers (Eibhlis Farrell and Michael Holohan) had agreed for their names to go forward for potential co-option on to the Toscaireacht. A vote was taken and Eibhlis Farrell was co-opt onto the Toscaireacht.

5. Anthony Cronin's meeting with Mary Cloake:

(The Chair decided to move forward this item on the agenda)

Anthony Cronin provided a verbal report on his meeting with Mary Cloake which was held to discuss an increase in the value of the Cnuas.

He outlined the various arguments that he had put forward in support of the case, including:

- that the Cnuas was losing value rapidly, relative to the real cost of living and relative to other salaries etc which might have been considered comparable.
- that the original intention of Cnuas was that it would support an artist to dedicate him/her self to the full time pursuit of an artistic practice and in particular that it might allow an artist to release him/herself from a paid position in order to do this but that given the current value of the Cnuas this would no longer be possible.
- that if the Cnuas should continue to lose value that Aosdána would lose a great part of its meaning.
- that the sum of €20,000 was reasonable in light of relevant statistics and that it would be dubious whether any lesser sum would address the issues.
- that the increase should be index linked so as to avoid the need for Aosdána to be returning to the Arts Council in subsequent years seeking further increases

It was reported that Mary Cloake agreed with these points in principle and that she made enquiries as to:

- whether members would be open to considering new ways of engaging with the public as part of their membership of Aosdána?
- the increasing membership of Aosdána

Anthony Cronin reported that he responded to these enquiries by pointing out that most artists consider their work to be their primary point of contact with the wider world, but that most artists would be willing to become involved in anything of public value in relation to the arts but that this shouldn't be a pre-requisite for membership of Aosdána or receipt of the Cnuas. He also acknowledged that the increasing membership of would be a matter of concern with regards the financial implications of the Cnuas and that it was his opinion that a ceiling should be set.

In discussion with the Toscaireacht Anthony Cronin reported that the request of the sum of €20,000 was received favourably, although no commitment had been made. and that one or more sub committees of the Council would need to consider the issue.

Anthony Cronin noted that this discussion took place before the gloomier forecasts about the forthcoming budgets began to appear but that in his opinion even if the current predictions of a standstill budget for the Arts Council were to be upheld that the unique and special relationship that Aosdána has with the Arts Council should make the raising of the Cnuas a priority for the Arts Council.

The members of the Toscaireacht welcomed Anthony's report and thanked him for the work undertaken on this issue on behalf of Aosdána.

Mary Fitzgerald and Brian Maguire asked about the next steps in the process. Anthony Cronin reported that it was his understanding that the request would be put to the Policy and Strategy Committee meeting on the 19th November.

Dermot Healy raised the issues of the number of members now and in the future. Anthony Cronin stated that it was his feeling that the Arts Council would not want an open-ended commitment.

Sam Walsh reminded the Toscairí that the last time the Cnuas was increased it was an implied condition that Aosdána allow entry to artists from Architecture and Choreography and wondered if any increase would be attached to new conditions.

Mannix Flynn suggested that a business plan for Aosdána be developed to give weight to the request for increasing the Cnuas.

It was suggested that the Toscaireacht pass a motion endorsing Anthony Cronin's report. Following this discussion the following motion was passed:

“At its meeting of 5th November 2007 The Toscaireacht welcomed and wholeheartedly endorsed Anthony Cronin’s report on his meeting with the Director of the Arts Council Mary Cloake with regard to increasing the Cnuas to €20,000 p.a. in order to maintain its intended value and to bring it into line with the reality of present day conditions.”

6. Minutes from General Assembly

Toby Dennett reported that the minutes from the General Assembly were based on a recording of the proceedings. The chair decided to defer discussion of the minutes.

7. Date for General Assembly

8. Nominations for new Members

(It was decided to consider the 2 above items together)

The Registrar reported that an announcement of the call for nominations for new members was over due and that this needed to be implemented as soon as possible in order to ensure that the General Assembly could be held before May. The Registrar distributed a draft schedule outlining key dates in the election and planning process in the lead up to the General Assembly.

Following discussion it was agreed that the call for nominations would be distributed immediately, that the deadline for nominations would be set for 17th December and that if possible the Toscaireacht would meet on 19th December to review the nominations.

It was also agreed that the draft Schedule represented a workable timetable for a lead in to the General Assembly. It was agreed that the Registrar would look into the availability of venues for the General Assembly.

7. A.O.B

The Registrar distributed a short report outlining a number of recent issues some of which it was noted would require the attention of the Toscaireacht. After consideration of the report and following discussion it was agreed that:

- Manix Flynn would act as a contact to the film makers producing the documentation on Aosdána
- Notice of the increase in the number of Saoi and the nomination process should be distributed immediately

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be 19th December 2007 but that this would be subject to confirmation by the Registrar.

The registrar requested nominations for the position of Chair for the next meeting. Seoirse Bodley was nominated and elected as Chair for the next meeting.