

Minutes

Meeting of Toscaireacht

1pm – 3pm, 5 September 2019 at The Arts Council, 70 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

Present

Anne Haverty (Chair), Cathy Carman, Michael Holohan, Thomas McCarthy, Bob Quinn, Rhona Clarke, Eamon Colman, Geraldine O'Reilly

In attendance

Karen Hennessy (Aosdána Registrar)

Apologies

Vincent Woods, Samuel Walsh

Previous minutes and matters arising

Minutes of meeting 27 June were reviewed and adopted. Michael Holohan proposed the minutes and Geraldine O'Reilly seconded.

The Aosdána web site

Anne Haverty asked when the discussion on the description of Aosdána and how it was established would continue. The Registrar outlined that this would continue when the Working Group meets again. The Registrar to check on suggested dates for this. Michael Holohan outlined that the current brief definition on the web site works for now. It was agreed that this short statement outlined the reason Aosdána was set up and thereby serves a clear purpose.

Aosdána, founded in 1981, honours artists whose work has made an outstanding contribution to the creative arts in Ireland, and assists members in devoting their energies fully to their art practice.

Cathy stated it seemed unnecessary to be so bogged down with descriptions. Anne requested one person look at the two descriptions on the table, which were circulated to members as a reminder. It was thought that they are quite similar and with small adjustments one definition could be reached. Anne proposed that Tom look at this and see if he could work the two definitions into one which could be proposed to the working group. This was seconded by Bob Quinn and agreed by the members. It was agreed that the definition on the web site needed to be crisp and clear and if further detail was needed then this could be added in a 'more' section but to keep the definition itself crisp and clear.

The Cnuas increase

Anne Haverty updated that she spoke with Kevin Rafter, new Arts Council Chair, at the Saoi ceremony. There has been no further response to the Toscaireacht's letter in relation to the Cnuas since the Chairs acknowledgement letter read out at the last meeting.

The Toscaireacht Election

A timeline to open the Toscaireacht election process was proposed by the Registrar and accepted by the members. This will begin week of 9 Sep with deadline for nominations being end of September and new Toscaireacht elected by mid- December 2019. The new term is from 19 Jan 2020 – 18 Jan 2022.

Call for nominations

A timeline to open this election process after the Toscaireacht election process was underway was proposed by the Registrar and accepted by the members. The call for nominations will open on 10 Oct and close on 15 November 2019.

A query had come in from a member as to when it was allowable for a 'Secunder' to speak in place of a 'Nominator' at a General Assembly. It was stated that this is always permissible even if both are present. It was stated also that the preferred term is 'Nominator' and 'Secunder' and not 'Proposer' and 'Secunder'.

The Registrar outlined that the current membership is at 250 and should it remain as such then the call for nominations will go out with a proviso that no new member can be elected if this number does not decrease before the General Assembly.

It was outlined that since a change in the voting mechanism, introduced in 2015, that the new *'first past the post system'* has resulted in the limit of 250 members being reached at each subsequent GA and that spaces have only become available through members passing away or resigning. It was thought that this has implications long-term and that it is worth looking at. It was also thought that the quota system that exists at the Discipline Ballot stage might have been negatively impacted upon by the removal of the 'No' vote which happened in 2008. It was thought worthwhile to look at re-introducing a 'No' vote on the Discipline Ballot paper. It was outlined that the X only marking system has been working so that this should remain the same however the 'No' voting option should be explored once again at the next meeting.

The importance of members voting was discussed. This not only has a bearing on who is elected but is vital for Aosdána itself, and that members need to be able to vote 'No' as well as 'Yes'. There was a feeling that members were abstaining from voting because there is no 'No' vote and that this was affecting participation in elections and quotas as a result.

General Assembly 2020

The following dates we suggested for the Registrar to look in to. Early April – 1, 2, 3 April and late April -22, 23, 24, 29, 30 April. Not to look at Easter week of 6 and 13 April.

Venue in Dublin - Ideas

It was proposed that the Registrar investigate the availability of IMMA whilst also looking into UCD and Trinity with whom the Arts Council has a relationship via the Laureate for Irish Fiction and the Chair of Poetry. O'Reilly Hall in UCD was suggested and Dr. Lucy Collins as a point of contact. The exam hall in Trinity was suggested.

The Mansion House was proposed as a possible venue for 2021 when Aosdána celebrates 40 years and it was suggested that the Registrar investigate this soon also due to the schedule of the Mansion House with activity around the Foundation of the State. It was also suggested to look at Queens for 2021 and that this could be a good follow on from UCD or Trinity.

A draft of a letter to members was circulated by the Registrar. This letter to accompany the call for nominations in 2019 is to highlight current statistics and encourage nominations across art forms and gender. It was proposed that a second letter be sent when the discipline ballot is issued as it was thought to have more impact to emphasise voting when voting is actually taking place. This second letter is to remind members of their responsibility in relation to voting on nominees and attendance at the General Assembly. The Registrar to re-write the letter into two separate letters.

Saoi Ceremony / Coverage

It was agreed that there was a great ceremony for Roger Doyle and that he spoke very well. The Registrar will circulate the vimeo link to the film by Se Merry Doyle for those members who were unable to attend. The Registrar will order more photos from Maxwells for the Aosdána web site of the event itself. Michael Holohan and the Chair said that the absence of a seat for a representative of the Toscaireacht on the podium and as a participant in the photos was a regrettable omission. The Registrar noted this request for future Saoi ceremonies. She said that the format of the event had followed existing protocol and had been signed off by the President's office.

Motion from GA – Card for Mary Loughlin

Anne Haverty will write a letter to Mary Loughlin as per the SO passed at the GA2019 from the Toscaireacht and the members. Eamon Colman suggested sending a print by Geraldine O'Reilly with the letter and this was agreed by all as a great idea. The Registrar provided the address for Mary Loughlin, in Farrera, Spain.

Next Meeting

The Registrar proposed 18, 19 or 20 Nov to tie in with when the call for nominations closes (15 Nov) so that nominations can be checked. Registrar will send out a doodle poll.

Ends.