

# The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon

670<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting

70 Merrion Square

Tuesday, 25 March 2014 at 14:00

**Present:** Sheila Pratschke *Chair*, Aibhlín McCrann, *Deputy Chair*, John Fanning, Brian Maguire, John McAuliffe, Éimear O'Connor, John O'Donnell, Mark O'Regan, Joan Sheehy, Monica Spencer Ciarán Walsh, Judith Woodworth.

**In attendance:** Orlaith McBride *Director*, Martin O'Sullivan *Finance Director & Company Secretary*.

## Documents before the meeting

Agenda

Minutes of meeting held on 26 February 2014

Director's Report

Peer Panel Long List 2014

Bursary Awards

Travel & Training Awards

Aosdána Cnuas

## 14 – 03 – 023 Apologies

Miriam Dunne and John O'Donnell.

## 14 – 03 – 024 Chairman's Introduction

*Conflicts of Interest*

The Chair requested members to declare any conflicts that they may have with the agenda items and reminded members to advise her of any conflicts that may arise during the course of the meeting.

The Chair highlighted the increased number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received at this point and requested members to be careful of what is said outside the Council Room.

The Chair referenced the 'wonderfully energetic' Policy & Strategy meeting held earlier in the day commenting that the type of thinking and analysis provided, by the staff, should be the primary focus of the Council going forward with a need to reduce the focus and time spent on the minutiae of grant decisions.

## 14 – 03 – 025 Minutes of the Plenary meetings: 26 February 2014

The minutes of the plenary meeting held on 26 February 2014 were considered and **approved**.

## 14 – 03 – 026 Matters arising from the minutes

*Publication of Minutes and Council Diary on the Arts Council Website*

Members sought an update on the current status. The Director confirmed that preparations are at an advanced stage with the intention being to publish minutes for 2012, 2013 and 2014.

Members **agreed** that only approved minutes following agreement by Council should go up on the website.

*Cork Midsummer Festival*

The Director confirmed that the Executive are fully engaged, with the organisation, on the current festival plan and restructure. The Director also confirmed that to-date no negative publicity has arisen from the funding decision.

*Grant/Grant-in-aid*

The Director confirmed that, to-date, no formal communication, on the matter, has been received. The Director did confirm that quarterly meetings are being scheduled between the Chair, Director and the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) which will allow for matters such as this to be raised.

**14 – 03 – 027 Director's Report**

*Opera Production Award 2015*

John O'Kane, Arts Director, joined the meeting. [REDACTED]  
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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Members **agreed** to look at 2016 allocation for the Opera Production Award later this year. This measure would ideally also take into account other funding programmes that required a forward commitment, such as Touring.

In relation to assessment of the applications the Arts Director recommended the introduction of numerical scores to strengthen the current criteria based assessment process commenting that in instances where feedback is sought from unsuccessful applicants, this feature will provide additional transparency regarding the internal process.

Members sought clarity on why scoring should now be introduced for this award when a process was already in place whereby, following a recommendation of the Audit Committee, a paper on scoring was to be referred to and discussed by the Grants Committee. It was clarified that the proposed scoring was specific to this once off competitive round and was not the overall proposed scoring system.

Following a detailed discussion on the matter the Chair highlighted the need for the Council to have a system of scoring assessments in place which both provides members with clarity and

confidence in terms of the recommendations as well as ensuring a robust and transparent assessment process that supports and protects the staff.

Members **agreed** not to use numerical scoring for the Opera Production Award 2015.

Members also **agreed** that the existing paper on scoring be finalised and brought to the April Grants Committee for discussion with the intention that a recommendation be brought to the April Plenary meeting for ratification and to pilot its introduction during the upcoming Theatre Project Awards.

#### *Film Artist in Residence at UCC*

The Director briefed members confirming that the proposed 3yr residency with University College Cork, commencing in September 2014 at a cost to the Arts Council of €10k per annum, would offer a film artist a unique opportunity to develop his / her practice. It would also offer students the opportunity to engage with a practising film artist in a meaningful way during the course of their studies. Furthermore, the residency would have a significant public dimension, through a formal association with the Cork Film Festival.

Members asked if other third level institutions were considered for the residency. The Director updated members on the selection approach taken. Members also sought clarity as to why the residency was directed at film directors and writers and whether it could be opened up to other professions such as cinematography and actors. The Director confirmed that the focus of the residency is on film making and film studies thereby targeting directors and writers. Members also asked whether in the future a visual artist in residency might be considered for a school of architecture.

Following a detailed discussion, members **agreed**:

- to allocate €10,000 per annum, for 3years, from non-recurring funding within the film budget to support the residency;
- to explore the possibility of developing a Visual Artist Residency in a school of architecture;
- a progress update on all current university residencies be brought to a future Policy & Strategy Committee meeting.

#### *Boardmatch Transparency Scale*

The Director briefed members confirming that Boardmatch Ireland recently published a Governance Transparency Scale to help not-for-profit organisations identify the level of corporate information that needs to be published on an organisation's website. Members were asked to approve the distribution of the Governance Transparency Scale to all of the Arts Council's recurring funded organisations.

Members welcomed the recommendation and **agreed** that the Governance Transparency Scale should be distributed.

#### *Change to Council Diary*

Members **noted** the change of date for the September Policy and Strategy and Plenary meetings originally scheduled for the 16 September. Both these meetings will now take place on the 23 September.

#### *Committee Membership*

Members were asked to **note** the following Committee appointments:

- Éimear O'Connor to the Policy & Strategy Committee as Committee Chairman;
- Brian Maguire to the Policy & Strategy Committee;
- Miriam Dunne to the Business & Finance Committee;
- Joan Sheehy to the Audit Committee.

#### *Strategic Review 2014*

Members **noted** the update and acknowledged the significant work being done by the Executive on Strategic Review 2014.

#### *Director's Diary Report*

Members **noted** the Director's Diary Report.

Members asked about the 'Yeats' Year'. The Director confirmed that it is being led out by the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht as part of the Decade of Commemorations.

### **14 – 03 – 028 Reports**

#### *Audit Committee meeting 3 March 2014*

The Finance Director & Company Secretary briefed members on a special meeting of the Audit Committee convened to review the staff disciplinary process. It was confirmed that the Committee was satisfied that the disciplinary process had been properly followed and in terms of public communication that the record should now read 'the disciplinary matters have been reviewed, acted upon, and a review of the process is now in place'. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The report and recommendation of the Audit Committee were **agreed**.

Members asked if they could be circulated with the full minutes of the meeting. It was confirmed that the minutes have yet to be agreed by the Audit Committee and that the request will be considered at the next Audit Committee meeting on April 14.

#### *Policy & Strategy Committee meeting 2014*

The Committee Chairman briefed members on the meeting.

Arts Council Art Collection - the draft of the policy document which would be the main output of the person who won the tender currently in progress would be presented to the committee in the autumn, pending which an update report would be provided to Council.

Public Art - it was agreed that public art (and the focus of Arts Council advisory function in this area) would be considered again by the committee later in the year.

Ballet Review -the report was welcomed and adopted. It would be published shortly and become the basis for dialogue with the dance sector and wider interests as opportunities arose.

Strategic Development Department Work Programme - the presentation was welcomed and the thrust of the work commended. There was recognition that there would have to be greater corporate investment in the work programmes described if the Arts Council was to be an effective expert agency exercising in particular its responsibilities in advice and advocacy.

The report and recommendations of the Policy & Strategy Committee were **agreed**.

#### **14 – 03 – 029 Peer Panel Long List 2014**

Members discussed the proposed additions and deletions to the Current Master List. Following a detailed discussion it was **agreed** that the Current List requires further consideration and that each Member should feedback proposed amendments to the Director.

#### **14 – 03 – 030 Awards**

##### *Bursary Awards*

The Bursary awards were **noted** by members. A Financial Appendix is attached to the minutes.

Members noted that the bursary award of €14k to John Byrne was not correctly recorded and should be corrected.

Members noted that technology and access to imagery continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed. The Director confirmed that a couple of options are now being considered 1) the use of tablets and 2) the CRM system. Members asked that the 'lightbox' system, used successfully by UCD, should also be considered.

There was general discussion on the effectiveness of panels with some members noting that they found it rewarding to chair panels from art forms / practice areas outside of their own area of expertise. Members also confirmed that panel members were highly informed and thoroughly engaged.

##### *Travel & Training*

The Travel & Training awards were **noted** by members. A Financial Appendix is attached to the minutes.

##### *Aosdána Cnuas*

The renewal of Vincent Wood's Cnuas was **approved**.

#### **14 – 03 – 031 Any other business**

##### *Visit by Jimmy Deenihan, TD, Minister Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht*

The Chair briefed members on the Minister's visit later that afternoon confirming that 1) Literature 2) Theatre Touring and 3) Ciste Cholmcille were matters which the Minister would like to discuss with members.

The Director confirmed that the Arts Council will shortly make a presentation to the Minister on our work in the area of literature specifically outlining our policy on literature and our priority areas.

#### Summary of decisions/actions

1. Minutes of meeting held on 26 February 2014 **approved**.
2. Matters arising from the minutes: **agreed** that only approved minutes following agreement by Council should go up on the website.

3. Director's Report

*Opera Production Award 2015*: the following was **agreed**:

- look at 2016 allocation for the Opera Production Award award later this year and also ideally take into account other funding programmes that required a forward commitment, such as Touring.;
- not to use numerical scoring for the Opera Production Award 2015;
- the existing paper on scoring be finalised and brought to the April Grants Committee for discussion with the intention that a recommendation be brought to the April Plenary meeting for ratification and to pilot its introduction during the upcoming Theatre Project Awards.

*Film Artist in Residence at UCC*: the following was **agreed**:

- allocate €10,000 per annum, for 3years, from non-recurring funding within the film budget to support the residency;
- explore the possibility of developing a Visual Artist Residency in a School of Architecture;
- progress update on all current university residencies be brought to a future Policy & Strategy Committee meeting.

*Boardmatch Transparency Scale*: **agreed** that the Governance Transparency Scale be distributed.

4. Reports

The report and recommendations of the Audit Committee and Policy & Strategy Committee were **agreed**.

5. *Peer Panel Long List 2014*: **agreed** that the current list requires further consideration and that each member should feedback proposed amendments to the Director.

6. Awards

*Bursary Awards*: amend incorrect record *amount requested* for John Byrne.

*Aosdána Cnuas*: Vincent Wood **approved**.

There being no other business the meeting ended.

