

# The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon

671<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting

70 Merrion Square

Tuesday, 15 April 2014 at 14:00

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

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

## **Documents before the meeting**

Agenda

Minutes of meeting held on 25 March 2014

Director's Report

Recommendations: Opera Production Awards 2015

Financial Statements 2013

Draft Letter of Representation

Draft Chairman's Letter to Minister

Annual Review on the effectiveness of the Arts Council's system of Internal Financial Control 2013

Peer Panel Long List 2014

Music Commissions

Traditional Arts Commissions

Deis Awards

Travel & Training Awards

## **14 – 04 – 032 Apologies**

Mark O'Regan.

## **14 – 04 – 033 Chairman's Introduction**

*Conflicts of Interest*

The Chair requested members to declare now any conflicts of interest they were aware of as arising from the agenda of the meeting. She further reminded members to advise her of any such conflicts that might arise during the course of the meeting.

## **14 – 04 – 034 Minutes of the Plenary meetings: 25 March 2014**

The minutes of the plenary meeting held on 25 March 2014 were considered and **approved**.

## **14 – 04 – 035 Matters arising from the minutes**

*Audit Committee meeting 3 March 2014*

[REDACTED]

## **14 – 04 – 036 Director's Report**

### *New Approach to agreeing advanced budgetary provision*

Members were briefed on the need to plan for funding schemes (such as Opera Production Award and Touring and Dissemination of Work Scheme) that provide funding for periods beyond the next calendar year. It is therefore proposed that, commencing in October 2014, proposals will be brought to the Business and Finance Committee regarding the level of budgetary provision to be made for these schemes in 2016. The proposal was **agreed**.

### *Remembering Seamus Heaney -Celebrating Seamus Heaney*

Members were briefed on a special tribute to Seamus Heaney at the National Concert Hall on 23 April organised by Poetry Ireland in association with Dublin City Council: One City, One Book. It was **agreed** to offer a one-off grant of €10,000, from contingency, to this event.

### *Remembering Seamus Heaney - MacGill Summer School*

Members were briefed on the initiative where the 2014 MacGill Summer School is to celebrate the work of Seamus Heaney who it was noted had a long standing relationship with the Summer School. It was confirmed that Joe Mulholland is to lead the project which is to include a high profile programme of performances, lectures, workshops, exhibitions, music and readings. It was **agreed** to offer a one-off grant of €12,000 to support this unique initiative.

Members **noted** Joe Mulholland's role in getting publicity for the event and the benefit it will bring to the Arts Council.

### *Meeting with Toscaireacht of Aosdána*

Members were informed that the meeting with the Toscaireacht of Aosdána is scheduled to take place at 2pm on Tuesday 13 May 2014 and were asked to nominate a delegation of members to attend the meeting.

Brian Maguire highlighted the good relationship that now exists between the Toscaireacht and the Arts Council confirming the current approach of working together on difficult matters has been well received by the Toscaireacht.

It was **agreed** that members will be circulated to confirm their availability to attend.

### *Abbey Review Meeting*

Members noted that the Abbey Review meeting is scheduled for May 2 at 1pm.

### *Arts Audiences*

Members were asked to **note** the following upcoming 2014 events:

- May 15th - Google @ the arts;
- July 4th - Arts Audiences training for alumni and for the 2014 intake;
- September 4th - Graduation of this year's Audience Development Programme.

### *Traditional Arts in Residence AC and UCC*

Stephanie O'Callaghan, Arts Director, joined the meeting and provided members with a progress update on the first Traditional Artist in residence (Iarla O' Lionáird) at University College Cork (UCC).

It was confirmed that the Head of Traditional Arts will meet with the Head of the School of Music and Theatre, UCC in early May to discuss how to build on the success of the initiative. A

meeting will also be held with Iarla Ó Lionáird to get feedback on the residency from the artist's perspective, particularly in the context of having the space and time to focus on his own practice. Members welcomed and **noted** the update.

#### *Partnership between Arts Council and NCH*

Stephanie O'Callaghan, Arts Director, updated members on the Tradition Now pilot partnership with the National Concert Hall (NCH) which took place on the 25/26 January. It was confirmed that key objectives, of the successful event, were 1) to bring highly creative and ambitious music from the Irish tradition and beyond to existing and new and appreciative contemporary music audiences and 2) to help develop a much more embedded relationship around Traditional Music with the NCH.

Members were asked to take 'stock' of whether or not to proceed to develop the relationship further. It was noted that the opportunity provided under the Tradition Now pilot partnership approach would not be possible through the grants process in terms of achieving agreed strategic objectives by both partners.

Members sought clarity on why NCH was being prioritised over other Traditional Arts organisations. It was also noted that there needed to be a much more structured approach to marketing taken if the project was to develop with due acknowledgement given to the Arts Council as an equal partner.

Following a detailed discussion, members **agreed** that the Executive should proceed to develop the relationship with the intention of bringing a proposal back for members' approval later in the year.

#### *Director's Diary Report*

Members asked what feedback had been received following the presentation made to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) on the Arts Councils policy and strategy in Literature. The Director confirmed that the Minister was extremely impressed with the range and breadth of interventions being made by the Arts Council in Literature and what was also clear was that the Minister wasn't aware of all the aspects of the work (including Advice and Advocacy) being done by the Arts Council. It was **agreed** that there is a need to put in place a better reporting/briefing mechanism/protocol with DAHG on all areas of the Arts Council's work.

The Director confirmed that the Minister was also updated on the review of Literature resource organisations and that he was particularly interested in the feedback from the review.

John McAuliffe, Council Member, asked for an update on the Literature Centre 2011 feasibility study. It was **agreed** that it would be best to circulate members with the original feasibility study from 2011 and schedule a discussion for the next plenary on its principal findings.

Members also asked for an update from the meeting with Ministers Quinn and Deenihan in relation to the Arts-in-Education Charter. The Director stressed the urgent need for the initiative to be fully embedded into the policies of both Departments. On a positive note the Director confirmed that the arts in education portal will be funded by DAHG and that the joint initiative between the Arts Council, the Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST) and arts organisations looking at how the arts can support teachers in delivering key curriculum areas as a pilot programme has now been developed and certified by the Department of Education and Skills as a summer course to be delivered in Education Centres across the county. The Director also confirmed that the PSED (Public Sector Education Dividend) has been de-prioritised from the Charter's actions.

Furthermore the Chair confirmed that the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will jointly host a conference with the Higher Education Authority as part of the Charter. It was confirmed that the Chair will act as panel chair for a module on Arts/Culture and the Third Level Sector while the Director will make a presentation on Creative Europe. It was **agreed** that members would be circulated with the conference date/details.

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

#### **14 – 04 – 037 Reports**

*Grants Committee meeting 14 April 2014*

The Committee Chairman briefed members on the meeting.

Minutes of meeting held on 11, 12 & 13 December were approved.

Minutes of 24 February were approved.

*Opera Production Award 2015*

Three Opera Production Awards were recommended for approval:

- Landmark Productions- €390,075.79
- Irish Youth Opera- €215,704.72
- Everyman Theatre- €294,219.49

A financial appendix is attached to the minutes.

*Grant Programmes 2014/15 Update Reports*

Specific matters arising were as follows:

- Cork Midsummer Festival: it is understood that the festival will be proceeding with some adjustments to programme and that an independent review, being conducted by Arthur Lappin, is being progressed;
- Irish Traditional Music Archive [REDACTED]
- Rough Magic Theatre Company [REDACTED]
- Viability issues: it was noted that some funded organisations in music faced genuine challenges regarding their ongoing viability; as an outcome of a series of funding reductions, some performing arts organisations had reduced artistic output and this had an unseen impact in terms of reducing the amount of work available for artists;
- Funded Venues: noted ongoing viability issues and that current Council strategy for Venues was unsustainable which has arisen as a particular focus of Strategic Review 2014.

*Funding Decision Making Models and Scoring Systems*

A document setting out an approach for adopting criteria based scoring was discussed in detail following which:

- It was agreed to undertake a major project to introduce criteria based scoring for all funding programmes. Arising from the outcomes of the current strategic review, this initiative was expected to have a number of phases and amount to a major corporate project. Following an initial research and project scoping phase, a detailed proposal would be brought back to the Council seeking agreement to proceed to a subsequent implementation phase.
- It was agreed that the Theatre Project Award would transfer to decision making via peer panels, in line with how the award was managed in other art forms. This change would take place in time for the autumn round (i.e. 2015 Round 1). It was noted that the current criteria for the award would ensure that the outcomes of the peer panel process would include supporting applicants to the production.
- It was agreed to introduce numerical scoring for decisions taken by the Grants Committee, commencing with the Touring & Dissemination of Work Scheme 2015 round 2 (decisions due in February 2015). Information on how this would work in practice (akin to a 'test run') would be provided to the Committee at a forthcoming meeting.

The Report and recommendations of the Grants Committee were **agreed**.

The Director also sought approval for two additional matters:

1. Programme Activity Fund -YPCE to be delegated and moved under a panel process similar to that used for the Youth Ensemble Scheme;
2. To develop a scoring system for the Festival & Events Scheme from and including 2015 onwards.

Both recommendations were **agreed**.

#### *Business & Finance Committee 14 April 2014*

The Committee Chairman briefed members on the meeting as follows:

- Minutes February 24 meeting agreed;
- First quarter accounts agreed;
- It was confirmed that following finalisation of the Financial Statements that an additional €200k of savings is now available for 2014. It was agreed that a paper, on how best to use, would be brought to the May Plenary;
- Strategic Development Department 2014 budget to be presented to P&S as part of 2014 work plan was agreed;
- Risk Register was approved - it was noted that the Arts Council risk profile has increased with a higher proportion of risks now in the 'High' or 'Medium' category;
- Lease renewal / relocation update given. It was agreed that a key dates timeline together with a schedule of related costs will be brought to the next B&F meeting;
- HR update noted - including an update on the approach/process in place to seek a replacement for John O'Kane - members noted the heightened risk facing the Arts Council during this inter-regnum offering full support as required to expedite matters;
- FOI listing noted;
- ICT update noted - confirmation that the Corporate website will shortly go live;

- Value for Money Policy Review by DPER/DAHG update noted; it was also agreed that Professor John O'Hagan, Steering Group Chair would be invited to meet with the Council or a delegation from the Council.
- In relation to budget planning for 2015 it was agreed that the Budget Strategy Process should be included as part of the B&F work plan for 2014.

The report and recommendations of the Business and Finance Committee were **agreed**.

*Audit Committee meeting 14 April 2014*

Jimmy Murphy, Committee Chairman joined the meeting and briefed members on the meeting of 9 December 2013 and 3 March 2014. The minutes of meetings on December 9 and March 3 were agreed;

Matters arising from March 3 meeting:

[REDACTED]

Matters arising from 14 April Meeting

Grants scoring system: the Chairman of Business & Finance Committee updated members on the proposed approach as outlined to the Grants Committee. Members welcomed and noted the update;

Supplier bank details: Finance Director briefed members on the solution now in place. Members noted the update;

Meeting with C&AG: Georgina O'Mahoney, C&AG, joined the meeting. The Committee Chairman highlighted the following matters:

[REDACTED]

Following a detailed discussion the following was agreed:

- Finalise 2012 Management letter with final draft to come to be brought to the next Audit Committee meeting;
- Audit Plan 2013: emphasis placed on getting sign-off of 2013 Financial Statements by end July at the latest;
- Audit Queries: ensure that following audit fieldwork that only one set of queries is produced and that audit is not subsequently opened up again;
- ICT Security Audit: noted that consultant procured and audit to take place in May;

Report on Committee Performance for 2013: approved.

Financial Statements 2013: approved;

- Letter of Representation: approved;
- Draft Chairman's letter to the Minister: approved.

Report on Internal Financial Controls 2013: approved.

Risk Register - approved.

Internal Audit Report 2013 action update – noted.

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

Finally the Committee Chairman thanked the Finance Director and his team for their work and support in the preparation and presentation of all Reports for the meeting.

#### **14 – 04 – 038 Financial Statements 2013**

Members **approved** the draft 2013 Financial Statements and **agreed** the nominated signatories as Sheila Pratschke and Ciarán Walsh.

Members also **approved** the draft Letter of Representation and the draft Chairman's letter to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

#### **14 – 04 – 039 Annual Review on the effectiveness of the Arts Council's system on Internal Financial Control for 2013**

Members **approved** the annual review of the effectiveness of the internal financial controls and confirmed that it had undertaken a review of the internal financial controls for 2013. Members **agreed** that the Chair is authorised to sign the annual Statement in the 2013 Financial Statements.

#### **14 – 04 – 040 Peer Panel Long List 2014**

The Director proposed that the current Panel List be used on an interim basis pending a full review and update during the summer. It was suggested that criteria should be established for each art form list and that these should be brought to the Policy and Strategy Committee for approval. It was also suggested that members should discuss their Panel List proposals with staff to ensure that they are all consistent with the agreed criteria for each art form.

Members **agreed** that a proposal on how best to proceed should be developed.

#### **14 – 04 – 041 North/South Plenary meeting (Belfast) 20 May 2014**

The Chair confirmed that the North South Plenary meeting will be held on May 20 in Belfast with the main issues down for discussion as 1) North/South Touring and 2) Jointly funded clients. The Chair reminded members that Bob Collins Chairman, Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI) is very open to cross border partnerships and ideas. Members suggested that a joint initiative to commemorate Seamus Heaney should be initially discussed with the ACNI at the forthcoming N/S Working Group meeting.

Members **agreed** the proposed approach and noted the itinerary.

#### **14 – 04 – 042 Awards**

All Panel Chairs complemented the panel members for their rigour and the staff for all their support and help.

##### *Music Commissions*

The Music Commissions were **noted**. A financial appendix is attached to the minutes.

##### *Traditional Arts Commissions*

Ciaran Walsh, Council Member, declared a conflict and left the meeting.

The Traditional Arts Commissions were **noted**. A financial appendix is attached to the minutes.

##### *Deis Awards*

The Deis Awards were **noted**. A financial appendix is attached to the minutes.

##### *Travel & Training Awards*

The Travel and Training awards were **noted**. A financial appendix is attached to the minutes.

##### *Festival and Events Scheme*

The three strands of the Festival and Events Scheme were **noted**. A financial appendix is attached to the minutes.

#### **14 – 04 – 043 Any other business**

##### *Salary levels in Funded Organisations*

The Chair referenced the various correspondence that had issued from and responses received by the Arts Council in relation to salary levels in organisations funded by the Arts Council. The Chair noted a concern in relation to one organisation in particular although it is not the only one where salary levels exceed government advised limits. Following a detailed discussion, members agreed that the Chair should write to the Chair of the organisation in question seeking a response by an agreed date.

##### *Acknowledgement of Arts Council Funding*

The Chair highlighted the use of the word 'gratefully' in acknowledgment of Arts Council funding as language which is unnecessary in the type of partnership relationship that the Arts Council wishes to foster with the sector.

[REDACTED]

##### *Nominating Panel Chairs*

Members enquired if there had been a change in the selection process for Panel Chairs. It was confirmed that this was not the case.

It was **agreed** that the full list of Panels should issue to all members going forward.

#### *The Abbey Review*

Members asked for an update from the Director. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It was confirmed that the Report will be presented to the Arts Council on May 2 following which a presentation will be made to the Abbey Board later that afternoon.

Members were also made aware that the Chair and Director together with the Chairman and Director of the Abbey are to form a small working group as a mechanism to move the Report findings forward.

#### *Recognition of John O'Kane*

John O'Kane, Arts Director, joined the meeting. The Chair, noting his imminent departure to RTE, took the opportunity to express members' sincere thanks for his commitment, professionalism, integrity and hard work which had always been carried out in exemplary fashion during his time with the Arts Council. The Chair also acknowledged John O'Kane's strategic contribution to the work of the Arts Council, which she confirmed, would continue to influence the Arts Council into the future.

In reply John O'Kane firstly expressed his sincere thanks for the 'very kind gesture' and thereafter thanked members for the opportunity the Arts Council had given him commenting that he had 'learned a huge amount'. In conclusion he wished the Arts Council every success and hoped to bring some of the positive thinking with him and also be an advocate for the Arts Council in RTÉ.

#### *Summary of decisions/actions*

1. Minutes of meeting held on 25 March 2014 **approved**.
2. *Matters arising from the minutes*: **agreed** that the Audit Committee minutes of meeting held on 3 March 2014 would now be made available to members via Board Pad for a 24 hour period.
3. Director's Report
  - *New Approach to agreeing advanced budgetary provision*: **agreed**.
  - *Remembering Seamus Heaney - Celebrating Seamus Heaney*: **agreed** to offer a one-off grant of €10,000, from contingency, to this event.
  - *Remembering Seamus Heaney - MacGill Summer School*: **agreed** to offer a one-off grant of €12,000 to support this unique initiative.
  - *Meeting with Toscaireacht of Aosdána*: **agreed** that members will be circulated to confirm their availability to attend.
  - *Partnership between Arts Council and NCH*: **agreed** that the Executive should proceed to develop the relationship with the intention of bringing a proposal back for members' approval later in the year.

- *Director's Diary Report*: **agreed** that there is a need to put in place a better reporting/briefing mechanism/protocol with DAHG on all areas of the Arts Council's work.
- *Literature Centre 2011 feasibility study*: **agreed** that it would be best to circulate members with the original feasibility study from 2011 and schedule a discussion for the next plenary on its principal findings.
- *Arts-in-Education Charter*: **agreed** that members would be circulated with the conference date/details.

The Report and recommendations of the Grants Committee were **agreed**.

**Agreed** that Programme Activity Fund - YPCE to be delegated and moved under a panel process similar to that used for the Youth Ensemble Scheme;

**Agreed** to develop a scoring system for the Festival & Events Scheme from and including 2015 onwards.

The report and recommendations of the Business and Finance Committee were **agreed**.

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

*Financial Statements 2013*: **approved**. Nominated signatories Sheila Pratschke and Ciarán Walsh **agreed**.

Draft Letter of Representation and the draft Chairman's letter **approved**.

*Annual Review on the effectiveness of the Arts Council's system on Internal Financial Control for 2013*: **approved**. **Agreed** that the Chair is authorised to sign the annual Statement in the 2013 Financial Statements.

*Peer Panel Long List 2014*: **agreed** that a proposal on how best to proceed should be developed.

*North/South Plenary meeting (Belfast) 20 May 2014*: **agreed** the proposed approach.

Any other business

- *Salary levels in Funded Organisations*: agreed that the Chair should write to the Chair of the organisation in question seeking a response by an agreed date.
- *Nominating Panel Chairs*: **agreed** that the full list of Panels should issue to all members in the future.

