

DIALOGUE FOR DIVERSITY
MINUTES of the Annual General Meeting
30 May 2019 at 12.20 p.m.
At 19c Mullacreevie Park, Armagh BT60 4BA

Present: Terry Howard (Chair), (Company Secretary)

Apologies: Pat Davis, Roma Carlisle.

In Attendance: Brian Lennon, Brendan McPartlin, Michael Bingham.

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the 2018 AGM were unanimously approved
Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded:

2. **Appointment of Directors**

Roma Carlisle and Yvonne Jennings were unanimously re-appointed as Directors for the coming year.

Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Pat Davis (email)

3. **Appointment of Chair**

Terry Howard was unanimously appointed Chair of the Directors

Proposed: Tom Layden; seconded: Pat Davis (email)

4. **Appointment of Company Secretary**

was re-appointed as Company Secretary

Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Tom Layden

5. **Appointment of Management Committee**

The following were unanimously appointed as members of the Management Committee:

- Brendan McPartlin
- Michael Bingham
- Kate Martin
- Frank Brady
- Brian Lennon

Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Tom Layden

6. **Treasurer's Report**

- The accounts for the financial year which have been prepared by Padraig O'Connor, Accountant, Armagh, were approved. A summary of the accounts are laid out below as Appendix Two.

Proposed Tom Layden, seconded Terry Howard.

7. **Appointment of Financial Overseer**

Padraigh O'Connor, Accountant, Unit A, 49 Keady Road, Armagh BT60 3NW was unanimously appointed Financial Overseer.

Proposed: Tom Layden, seconded Terry Howard.

8. **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman in his comments thanked all who had taken part in the Projects for their hard word. His report is attached as Appendix One. There being no other business the meeting concluded at 12.45 p.m.

Joyce F. Howard
May 30 2019
Chair

**Dialogue For Diversity
Programme Report
1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019**

Introduction

Dialogue For Diversity runs six main projects: Migrants Support, Community Support for ex-prisoners, Dialogue between divided groups, Community Development, Church Reform, and Support for the Irish Language. Steady progress was made in all areas.

Vision and mission

God, as three persons in relationship, made the world in their image and are developing it in their likeness. We want to join in this work and, at this time, contribute to building a community of right relations where everybody, especially the poor, find parity of esteem and equal opportunity. We aim to reduce prejudice and build social capital through a structured project of formal care and the promotion of day to day kindnesses. We also aim to facilitate entry to the labour market as a key to integration.

1. Migrant Support Service

Introduction

The Migrant Support Service aims to meet the needs immigrants settling into life in Craigavon. It helps with information, signposting, form filling and problem solving on issues such as obtaining a National Insurance Number, registering with a GP, opening a bank account, searching for jobs, getting a house, placement of children in schools, applying for universal credit, applying for right to reside, obtaining citizenship documentation, learning English etc. We serviced 800 people who visited on average four times each over the past year.

Service and Making a Difference

The majority are Portuguese speakers from Portugal, African countries, East Timor & Brazil. They mostly live in the more deprived quarters of Portadown. There was a sizeable minority from Romania who live in Belfast.

During the past year we have been developing the Facebook page and website, and a welcome pack. They face three big issues:

- The requirement that all EU citizens apply for Settlement Status. Three staff have obtained recognition from the Home Office as Level One immigration advisers in addition to our Immigration Specialist solicitor.
- The change in the welfare system to Universal Credit, which involves critical loss of income for some and increased capacity for providing information on earnings for others.
- The demand for a precariat is high and the rate of immigration and employment are holding.

The main strength of the immigrants is that they are young families looking for opportunities. We can help link connections between the migrants and statutory services especially schools. As we get to know people and as they experience themselves as part of a community they look beyond the project for Christian initiation rites.

We involve the community in the service by researching their needs and taking them on as volunteers and staff. A main concern for immigrants is to make a living so they often move on to jobs with better conditions.

Staffing and Financing

There are two part-time paid employees who carry the bulk of the labour and 20 volunteers including management committee members, fundraisers, and unpaid community development workers. They provide an estimated 4,500 hours of work throughout the year. The National Lottery is currently financing the project with £43,000 per annum from 2018 – 2020 under its 'People and Communities' programme. The Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council assisted with £2400 over the past year under its Community Development grant.

2. Prison Work

A. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community Support is a voluntary group that offers support and encouragement to newly released prisoners.

Impact

We made 191 visits in total. We saw 43 individuals and of these kept in close contact with over 10. This was less than in previous years and reflects a lower number of volunteers, which is why it is very good news that the number of volunteers has increased. *Of those we saw regularly none went back to prison.*

Mentees

Most of those we saw were medium to high risk of re-offending and struggle with addiction, and/or with underlying problems of depression and anxiety. Sometimes our support has involved simply listening to them as they and their families readjust to release: no one should underestimate the difficulty of re-engaging with a family, especially if there are teenagers involved, and also with the wider community, after having been inside for a number of years.

Some stories of our mentees:

One was very angry when he got out of prison. He had mental health issues, but was not taking his medication and was smoking drugs. Recently he shows every sign of having turned a corner: he is off drugs, is taking his medication, is applying for jobs, and is now getting on better with his probation officer. It was important for us to wait for this turning point to take place, and as always there will be more ups and downs in the future.

We were asked to accompany several mentees with special needs who were socially isolated. The key task was to help their confidence. These encounters were the only times that these men met someone outside their families.

Another mentee was very erratic in his attendance. But we were able to help in a situation where he got very angry when he was with a statutory agency, because they had changed his appointment without much notice, and he had to cancel a medical appointment for which he had been waiting for several months.

We helped another mentee by driving to a town for him, and persuading his son, with whom he has fallen out, to give us his wallet to pass on. This was important as the wallet contained his identity papers.

We helped rehouse one mentee in a new town where he has relatives. Our mentors went with him, identified a private flat, contacted a Methodist fund, helped him sign forms in the bank, and he was able to move in the same day. This was a fast response to his

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situation. With our encouragement he has got involved in local church activities. This will help break his social isolation. This is important as his wife died a few years ago, and he is still dealing with this.

We talked to a former mentee about becoming a mentor. In the end he decided that he was not yet ready for it.

Mentors

We welcomed Kieran Murphy and Ivan Duggan as Volunteers, and at the end of this period by Inge Ferguson. We are very grateful for their commitment. One of our long-time stalwarts, Osmond Mulligan, has had to withdraw for the moment because of family commitments. Our prayers are with him. Joe Baxter, who joined us for a short period, had to leave because of other commitments.

One of our volunteers commented on how rewarding he found being part of Community Support:

‘Mentoring has been a rewarding and worthwhile experience for me. I joined Community Support to share some life experience or guidance with mentees. In fact I have discovered from them how challenging their lives can be and that has really helped me to respond to them. I have also gained a lot from the process, both in terms of general self development and in learning from other volunteers and their experiences. This program can really help both mentees and volunteers.’

Handbook

Our handbook was extensively revised in the past year. This was done in the light of our experience. Our new volunteers found it very thoughtful and helpful.

Cooperation with other agencies

We continue to have excellent relations with prison staff in Maghaberry who have been very helpful to us in making contact with prisoners. They, together with Probation, Housing Rights, Quaker Service, and Prison Fellowship continue to serve on our Advisory Group.

Training

We offer volunteers on-going training. This is important, as learning needs to be continuous if we are to deepen our understanding of those we support. A key element in our training is our monthly Volunteer meetings. These are in effect peer training events in which each person reflects both on his or her own experience, but also on that of others. As well as this, we seek training from statutory bodies, and with other NGOs.

Funding

We had very good news towards the end of this period: the Assets Recovery Community Scheme will fund us for three years. We are very grateful to the Resettlement staff in NIPS who helped us with this application, and also to Volunteer Now for a small grant.

B. CHAPLAINCY

Frank Brady and Brian Lennon continue to work as part time prison Chaplains in Maghaberry Prison. A six session Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises was given to two more groups. Approximately 80 have now completed this. The process brings the group through some scripture stories and raises questions

about connections to their own lives. The process is in silence, without sharing. Feedback was very positive, so further series are planned.

C. SUPPORT FOR PRISONERS IN TRANSITION

Michael Bingham sees about 12 prisoners and former prisoners, most of whom he has been in touch with for several years. Many have been in and out of prison for most of their adult lives. Michael aims to give extra encouragement as people strive to integrate back into the community. Michael also accompanies men to meetings about housing, or with the police, or in court.

3. Dialogue Project

The Dialogue Project encourages conversations about difficult political and social issues among divided groups in Northern Ireland. Divisions are deep, as evidenced by the collapse of Stormont. Brexit has deepened divisions, especially in some working-class areas. This makes dialogue all the more urgent. As in previous years our focus has been on work with marginalised working-class Loyalists. We ran two residential, as well as a 7 session course for a group from the Newtownabbey, Co Antrim who were completely new to dialogue, and a trip to Dublin.

Participants in the first residential were deeply and emotionally divided over identity issues, especially the Irish language. In this they were reflecting the divisions at Stormont. Many of the women who were new to dialogue did not speak much, but this changed in the second residential because their confidence improved. In the second residential we were joined by a group from a Workers' Party background. This showed up differences of viewpoints among Republicans. This was important because many Loyalists overestimate the unity among Republicans.

A further issue arose at the first residential when two Loyalists withdrew. Although they had taken part in previous processes they seemed very uneasy with dialogue. One of them later broke the confidentiality contract by revealing the names of two participants on Facebook. This is the first time in 30 years of this work that we have had this problem. It may well be a symptom of a withdrawal into their own world of a section of the loyalist community.

At both residential some politicians who took part spoke strongly about how important the opportunity for dialogue was to them. They said they do not get this opportunity elsewhere, because while they are meeting people from different backgrounds regularly in their daily work, they do not get the chance to talk issues through.

The seven session course in Newtownabbey was different this year because we gave good deal of input on the tragedy of modern Irish history. While participants were interested in the 1912 Covenant, they were even more interested in 1916, and especially in the details of the 1920 Treaty debate. This was surprising, given that they were almost all Loyalists. Their commitment was shown by turning up regularly on a Saturday morning, and then taking a day off work for the trip to Dublin.

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In Dublin they had a dialogue with a group of women in Ballymun, then met the Taoiseach's N. Ireland adviser, and finally met 6 TDs and 1 Senator in the Dail. Inevitably dialogue was limited because of time constraints. The Northern group were struck both by how little people in the South know about the North, and also by the access people in deprived areas have to their politicians. They bemoaned the fact that DUP and other parties seldom attend community activities in Antrim.

4. Local community empowerment

We continued to support the SPRING youth project in Armagh which has about 90 active participants from local deprived estates in Armagh. The very good news is that the National Lottery has agreed to fund SPRING for three years. This has meant the difference between facing closure and a whole new era. Drugs, hopelessness, lack of confidence, and joblessness, all remain major issues.

Brendan MacPartlin is Chair of Grow in the Northern Ireland. This supports mental health self-help groups in Portadown, Newry and Belfast. Michael Bingham is Chair of Drumcree Trust and a Board Member of the Mayfair Business Centre.

5. Church Reform

Brian Lennon continued to serve on the Justice Commission of the Armagh Diocese. The group organised a very-well attended talk by Gerry O'Hanlon on the reform of the Church. They also arranged for a group of 15 local women from SPRING to meet Archbishop Eamon Martin. This was the first time any of them had been in Ara Coeli, and were impressed that the Archbishop served them food. The conversation was good, but it was only a first step. A second group from Dundalk has undertaken to bring a group, including Travellers to Armagh for a similar process, and the Archbishop hope to follow up with a return visit.

A conference is being planned for 9 November 2019 on the them: 'Climate Change AND the Church, or Climate Change IN the Church?'

Brian Lennon wrote an article for *The Furrow* arguing that a key issue in Church abuse is its management. Lay people and clergy will quite rightly have no confidence in the institution unless effective, transparent and independent structures are put in place world-wide to manage clergy in this area, including religious superiors, bishops and the Pope.

A guided retreat based on the Spiritual Exercises was given to a group of seven in Armagh. Feed back was very positive.

Conclusion

The basic aim of Dialogue For Diversity is to develop more respect and esteem for all groups in society, especially among marginalized people. A large number of people helped to make progress with the above projects. To them our thanks is due.

Joseph P. Howard, J
May 30 2019
Chack

Dialogue for Diversity - Prisons/ Migrants

Income and Expenditure

Period Ended 31.03.2019

	Overall Totals	Nr 1 Acc Holding 65564617	Nr 2 Acc Community 65598418	Nr 3 Acc Dialogue 65598421	Migrants 45317896
	£	£	£	£	£
Income					
Donations	-				
Loan received	3,500.00		1,000.00	2,500.00	
Grants	62,028.02		1,499.96	4,832.51	55,695.55
Bank Int. Received	-				
Transfer from Nr 3 A/C	1,000.00		1,000.00		
Transfer from Nr 2 A/C	500.00			500.00	
Dept.of Foreign Affairs and Trade	5,162.31			5,162.31	
Total Income	72,190.33	-	3,499.96	12,994.82	55,695.55

Expenditure

Accountancy	-				
Transfer to Nr 2 A/C	1,000.00			1,000.00	
Transfer to Nr 3 A/C	500.00		500.00		
Loan Refund	2,470.00			2,470.00	
Community Dialogue	-				
Bank Charges	90.41				90.41
Facilitation Costs	3,625.00			3,625.00	
Insurance	782.12				782.12
Rent	8,010.73		1,588.33		6,422.40
Salaries	25,267.83				25,267.83
Employee Pensions	1,266.49				1,266.49
Utilities	2,451.49				2,451.49
Travel	2,868.15		1,701.05	1,167.10	
Residential	4,681.92			4,681.92	
Subscriptions	10.00		10.00		
Subsistence	800.96		236.64	413.67	150.65
Tutors & Books	1,092.72				1,092.72
Office Supplies & Postage	608.31	13.00	99.99		495.32
Training	7,777.04				7,777.04
Telephone	989.48	131.88			857.60
Total Expenditure	64,292.65	144.88	4,136.01	13,357.69	46,654.07

Net Surplus (Deficit)	7,897.68	-144.88	-636.05	-362.87	9,041.48
Open Book at 01/04/18	4,836.21	343.33	950.93	735.01	2,806.94
net in/out	7,897.68	-144.88	-636.05	-362.87	9,041.48
Closing book bal	12,733.89	198.45	314.88	372.14	11,848.42

Bank Reconciliations

Bank balance 31st March 2018	16,659.05	192.19	8,617.28	4,393.91	3,455.67
less o/s cheques @ 31st March 2018	758.18	-	-	758.18	-
Book Balance	15,900.87	192.19	8,617.28	3,635.73	3,455.67

Signed by:

O'Connor & Co
O'Connor & Co
Unit 1, 49 Keady Road
Armagh
BT60 3NW

Loree P. Howards
May 30 2019
Chair