

DIALOGUE FOR DIVERSITY
MINUTES of the Annual General Meeting
12 November 2020 at 12.15 p.m. by ZOOM

Present: Terry Howard (Chair), Tom Layden (Company Secretary), Roma Carlisle, Frank Brady.

Apologies: Yvonne Jennings, Roma Carlisle.

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

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the 2019 AGM were unanimously approved
Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Tom Layden

2. **Appointment of Directors**

Roma Carlisle and Yvonne Jennings were unanimously re-appointed as Directors for the coming year. Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Tom Layden

3. **Appointment of Chair**

Terry Howard was unanimously appointed Chair of the Directors
Proposed: Tom Layden; seconded: Frank Brady

4. **Appointment of Company Secretary**

Tom Layden was appointed Company Secretary
Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Frank Brady

5. **Appointment of Treasurer**

Tom Layden was appointed Company Treasurer
Proposed: Terry Howard; seconded: Frank Brady

6. **Appointment of Management Committee**

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

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

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.

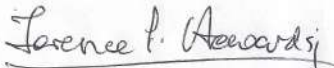
7. **Appointment of Financial Overseer**

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 work. His report is attached as Appendix One. There being no other business the meeting concluded at 12.45 p.m.

Signed:  **Terry Howard, Chair, 20 November 2020**

Appendix One: Programme Report: 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

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.

Inspired by the depth of the relationship within God in the Trinity, we aim to reduce prejudice and to build social capital through the promotion of day to day kindness. The projects cover the four Universal Apostolic Preferences adopted in 2019 by the Society of Jesus:

- Accompanying marginalised people
- Working with young people
- Care of our common home
- Using the discernment process of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius in each of these.

1. Migrant Support Service

Key activities in the past year

The Migrant Support Project, aid granted by the National Lottery, has been helping immigrants with settling in. The two big issues have been: making application for leave to remain (Settlement Status) because of the loss of EU citizenship rights; and submissions for Universal Credits because of changeover to a new system of social protection and the loss of income during the pandemic. A lot of this work can be done through information technology and was able keep going during lock down. English classes which were in high demand and RCIA activities ceased with lock down. The Migrant Support Service obtained registration as a charity in early May. It now has its own website www.abcmigrant.co.uk. [Governance training was held for its trustees and management in Early March.](#)

Impact

Besides helping about 800 people with the above issues the project attempts to involve the people in the project. It is delivered by a staff of two paid workers and 12 volunteers from immigrant and local communities. The main beneficiaries are Portuguese speaking Africans who are concentrated in the deprived areas of Portadown and Craigavon. We have done some needs analysis exercises with them and aim to leverage their strength and motivation to better the lives of their families. They say that our assistance helps them to navigate the complexities of settling into a new country, and while some would find their way, others end up in social isolation or return to their country of origin.

In the process we have developed mutually helpful relationships with relevant statutory agencies, and most recently with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

A typical story might be that of Ludmilla, who, though relatively well educated, had little English, and was obliged to take up shift work on a chicken production line under contract to an employment agency. This meant being on call under zero-hour arrangements, with barely statutory minimum pay, unpredictable hours, and minimum (if activated) holiday entitlements. She registered for and attended English classes. Being talented and diligent she progressed well at English. The company where she worked, on seeing her improvement in English, and recognising her potential, decided to employ her directly with improved hours, pay and general conditions and subsequently promoted her to a supervisory position. Present arrangements suit her family life and she is noticeably in better space and energy.

The Future

Introduction

Appendix One: Programme Report

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The Future

Employment, albeit low paying, has been abundant but the post lock down economy may not perform as well. The end of the Brexit transition in December 2020 means a new

immigration regime. Our current grant ends at that same time. Hopefully we can steer our way through these white-water rapids.

2. Community Support

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

Impact

We made 226 visits (up from 191 last year). We saw 27 individuals and of these kept in moderately close contact with over 20 and very close contact with 13. Of those we saw regularly only two went back to prison, one for three days only.

Mentees

Most 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. This can be difficult for any ex-prisoner, but is all the more so for those coming out after long sentences. Three of those we saw were in this situation.

Some stories of our mentees:

We were asked to accompany several mentees with special needs who were socially isolated. The key task was to help their confidence.

We are still in touch with a mentee that we helped to rehouse last year. He now has a job and says that he is doing very well.

One has been out for over a year. This is by far the longest period in his life that he has been out since his first sentence. His category status has also been reduced, which is good news.

Another we supported after a long sentence stressed the importance to of our visits being consistent. This was crucial in helping him to build trust.

Another has been up and down, but still managed to hold things together. He held down a job for a while, and is gradually getting more realistic about what he has to do in order to get steady employment.

Another continues to have a bad drink problem. He has contacted us several times on release which is a sign that he is beginning to look for help.

Several are socially isolated and their meetings with our Volunteers are the only conversations they have with anyone other than their Probation Officer, or people in shops. They suffer from boredom and a lack of structure in their day. Many of those in hostels look forward to the day that they can get their own flat. But this will not change the isolation, boredom and lack of structure for most. The only activity available to them will still be walking around the town.

Several mentees sent us texts wishing us well during the Covid lock down, and a number expressed gratitude for the support. This is despite the fact that sometimes mentors can be quite challenging - when this is appropriate.

During the Covid lock-down we kept in touch with several mentees by phone and text. This proved useful, but it was not the same as meeting someone for a cup of coffee. We also took

on several new mentees on the basis of phone contact. This was more difficult, as we had not built up a relationship with them prior to the lock down, but it seems to be working.

We continue to have excellent relations with prison staff in Maghaberry and with the Probation Service, who have increased the number of their referrals to us. These, together with, Housing Rights, Quaker Service, and Prison Fellowship to serve on our Advisory Group.

Training

We had a very useful training day in Maghaberry, during which Carol Carville (PBNI) gave us valuable insights on how to respond to sex offenders. Afterwards we had a session with Graham Stockdale, the lead chaplain. The day was an opportunity for new volunteers to see inside the prison, and this gave them a better idea of what their mentees have been through.

Funding

We continue to rely on the Assets Recovery Community Scheme for funding, and we very much appreciated the help we have given by all in Resettlement in Maghaberry with this.

The project is small but we feel we are making a difference to a number of isolated men. We are very conscious that any progress that mentees make is first and foremost due to their own efforts to deal with the multiple issues that many face. We also see ourselves as one of several organisations, voluntary and statutory, that are together offering support and encouragement.

3. Other prison work

CHAPLAINCY

Frank Brady and Brian Lennon withdrew for several months work from their work as part time Chaplains in Maghaberry because of the Covid virus. A six session Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises was given to four more groups. Feedback continues to be positive. Approximately 120 have now completed the process. Michael Bingham sees about 12 former prisoners.

4. Dialogue Project

During the this period we ran two dialogue residencials and 7 seminars. The residencials were for 20 participants on each occasion drawn from opposing political identities. While there was vigorous dialogue, as always, about issues such as the past, the security forces, and the constitutional future, there was also a focus on Brexit. The issue has deepened the divide between groups, and has become for many yet one more focus of identity.

There was also a growing frustration with going around in circles about these issues, and this led eventually to people looking at the pros and cons of different constitutional futures: United Ireland, some form of federation Scotland, and possibly Gibraltar, as well as a United Ireland. There was an increased willingness to take seriously the identity needs of groups other than one's own.

The seminars focussed on the history of the conflict in the late 19th and 20th centuries. We continually raised the question of 'Who was the 'We' in the past?' What connection was there between the participants' own group here and now, and the group in the past? Participants found a lot of commonality on health and environmental issues. It became blindingly obvious that if people who live in Northern Ireland want to improve their lives we will have to work together.

Because of Covid we had to cancel several seminars and the trip to Dublin. The latter is a particularly important as it involves meeting a local community group in Ballymun, and the

Taoiseach's Northern Ireland advisor with some other senior civil servants. These exchanges are important for both sides, and we hope that the events can be held in the near future.

5. Local community empowerment

We continued to support the SPRING youth project in Armagh which has about 90 active participants from local deprived estates. The National Lottery is now the sole funder. During the Covid lock down SPRING bought 9 laptops to help young people with homework, and also to run computer classes. They also contributed Lottery funds to Armagh Consortium who organised a major drive to provide food parcels for needy families, and home made PPE equipment, which was gratefully received by health workers. Michael Bingham continues to serve as Chair of Drumcree Trust.

6. Church Reform

Brian Lennon continued to serve on the Justice Commission of Armagh Diocese. In November 2019 the group organised a conference on the theme: 'Climate Change AND the Church, or Climate Change IN the Church?'. Among the participants were 20 students from St Mary's Magherafelt whose knowledge of climate issues, and the connection they made between these and passages from the Scriptures was striking.

7. Support for the Irish Language

This continues through *An Timire* and the publication of books in Irish.

8. New Climate Project

At the end of this period review we started a new climate project. With the inspiration of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* the project aims to help marginalised communities develop new projects to reverse global warming. The Irish Jesuits have given an initial seed funding grant, and we hope to hire a worker before the end of June 2020.

Conclusion

A large number of people helped to make progress with the above projects. To them our thanks is due.

Appendix Two

Dialogue for Diversity Income and Expenditure Account For the Year Ended 31 March 2020

	2020	
	£	£
<u>Income</u>		
Grants	64,376	
Donations	<u>195</u>	
		64,571
<u>Less Expenditure</u>		
Volunteer Expenses	2,043	
Bank Charges	86	
Utilities	2,070	
Insurance	183	
Rent	8,011	
Salaries	28,810	
Employee Pensions	1,974	
Residentials	5,014	
Facilitation	875	
Training Costs	364	
Travel Costs	3,403	
Office Supplies	267	
Accountancy	400	
Legal Fees	10,000	
Telephone	1,234	
Sundry	<u>10</u>	
		64,744
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		-173

**Dialogue for Diversity
Balance Sheet
As at 31 March 2020**

		2020
	£	£
<u>Fixed Assets</u>		4,569
<u>Current Assets</u>		
Bank Account	<u>12,101</u>	
	12,101	
<u>Current Liabilities</u>		
Loan from Jesuit Community	<u>3,000</u>	
<u>Net Current Assets</u>		<u>9,101</u>
Total Assets		<u>13,670</u>
Represented by: Capital Account		
Opening Surplus at 1 April 2019		13,843
Less Deficit for the year ended 31 March 2020		<u>-173</u>
Accumulated Funds At 31 March 2019		<u>13,670</u>

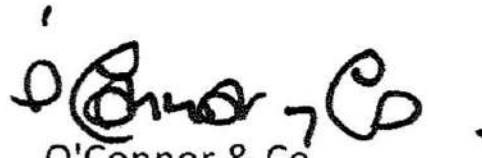
Dialogue for Diversity

Client's Approval of Accounts

I approve these accounts and confirm that I have made available all relevant records and information relating to the income and expenditure of the business for the year ended 31 March 2020 and to the assets and liabilities of the business at 31 March 2020.

Signature

Signed by:



O'Connor & Co

Unit 1, 49 Keady Road

Armagh

BT60 3NW

12 November 2020