

Minute 5
2020/21

Exemptions

FOI Exemptions:

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CONFIRMED



**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of the Arts Council
Held on Thursday 24 September 2020 at 2pm
via Microsoft Teams**

1. ATTENDANCE

PRESENT

John Edmund (Chair), Cian Smyth, Julie Andrews, Lynne Best, Liam Hannaway, Sean Kelly, Una McRory and Máirtín Ó Muilleoir

APOLOGIES

Katy Radford (Vice Chair), Noirin McKinney (Director of Arts Development) and Paul Harron (Director of Operations)

IN ATTENDANCE

Roisin McDonough (Chief Executive)
Geoffrey Troughton (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)
John Ball (DfC, Head of Arts & Creativity Branch)
Louise Hyland (DfC, Arts & Creativity Branch)
Diane Dillon (Assistant to the Board and Directors)

The Chair opened the meeting at 2pm and welcomed all. It was noted that two Board members were present in the Boardroom at Linen Hill House in order to facilitate the use of the Council seal (Item 7.1).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new conflicts of interest were declared.

3. PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 Minutes – 22 July 2020

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

3.2 Matters Arising

It was noted that On Board training has been scheduled for all new Board members.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

4.1 Board Work Plan

The Chair circulated a note of suggested strategic areas for the Board Work Plan prior to the meeting and asked that Board members consider some key issues going forward into 2021-22.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

5.1 Programme and Resources

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the report which outlined a number of programmes currently open and scheduled to open during October. She said that the level of applications for these programmes far outweighs the allocated budgets, and shows that there is still dire need within the sector for emergency funding.

The Board noted the report.

A Board member asked if there was any update on the £33M allocation from the Barnett consequentials. The Chief Executive advised that the NI Executive are due to meet later today and is hopeful that the allocation of funds will be on the agenda.

5.2 Staff

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the report which outlined an update on interim additional staffing measures, preparations for staff returning to work and a brief summary of the results of the staff survey carried out in August. At this time, staff are encouraged to continue to work remotely from home, however there continues to be a skeleton staff in the office.

The Chief Executive advised that [REDACTED] have provided additional resources pro bono, in order to assist with the volume of applications and assessments. The Department has also been made aware that additional staffing levels will be required in order to deliver the additional funding resulting from the Barnett consequentials.

A Board member supported the positive steps that had been taken in regard to sourcing additional staff to support the increase in workload and noted that it would be important for the Arts Council to find a way of communicating this to the sector, especially those artists and organisations that had applied for funding, in order to give them reassurance and confidence that additional measures were being put in place to support them. The Chief Executive agreed to share these comments with the Communications Team, who could convey this message in a future newsletter and also via ACNI's social media platforms.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the wider staff team for the development, promotion and delivery of the emergency programmes and acknowledged the hard work and efforts that have made this possible.

The Board noted the document.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services advised that ACNI use the GIFTS programme which is a robust grants management system. The Operations team are continually looking for ways in which to make the process better, he noted.

5.3 Survey Update

The report provided a general summary and key findings of two surveys undertaken by ACNI in respect of (1) Individual Artists and Creative Practitioners and (2) Arts Organisations in Northern Ireland. The Chief Executive advised that due to timing issues and the University summer recess, the surveys did not reach the wider audience originally anticipated. However, the results arising from the questionnaires completed, paints a stark picture of the current state of the arts sector. The Chief Executive advised that the statistical analysis has been shared with DfC. It is anticipated that further research will be undertaken during October/November.

Board members discussed additional opportunities that might help to capture statistics in future, for example, engaging with BECTU and SIPTU, the unions that represent freelance creatives and technician's, colleges, etc.

The Board noted the document.

5.4 Capital Update

The Chief Executive advised that the report was presented to, and discussed in detail, at the Finance and Capital Committee held on 22 September 2020. The report provided an overview of the current status of capital bids that have been

secured with the Department for the current financial year, and capital bids submitted for the next four financial years, 2021-2025.

The Board noted the report.

5.5 Request for Larger Organisations Immediate Support

The Chief Executive provided an update on the email which was circulated prior to the meeting and provided Board members with assurance that there would be no instances of double funding. She explained the rationale as to why the four large organisations listed had been selected for additional resources and how the funding would enable these venues to plan for future re-opening.

Board members raised several questions regarding the capital bid submitted to the Department in July 2020; these were addressed by the Chief Executive.

In relation to the larger organisations, the Chief Executive advised that the Minister had already approved an initial sum of £500k to meet some of the immediate and pressing needs of the larger organisations, but noted that an additional resource of £119k is still required.

Funding Recommendation

Board members were asked to consider and approve the allocation of this additional resource of £119k, which would then form the basis of a new bid to the Department.

With one exception, all Board members present at the meeting approved the request for the additional bid of £119k.

The Chief Executive thanked the Board for the approval and advised that she would notify members of any further updates from the Department.

6. FINANCIAL UPDATE

6.1 Financial Report

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services provided an overview of the report for month ending 31 July 2020 and highlighted key resource budget points.

Exchequer Resource

- Current DfC budget is £15.197M (this includes the in-year allocations of £1M and £4M).

- [REDACTED]

Risks for 2020-21 include:

- [REDACTED]

- Sectoral pressure for financial assistance arising from COVID-19. [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

Exchequer Capital

- The current Capital budget is £1.574M as of 31 July 2020.
- There is minimal expenditure.

ACNI Budget Bids

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services provided an overview of the paper which provided details of (i) Budget 2021-24 and (ii) October monitoring round, and advised that this item was discussed in detail at the Finance and Capital Committee held on 22 September 2020.

The Chair requested additional information on two of the bids.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Lottery

- Lottery income is based on projections and dependent on 'game play'.
- Lottery NLDF (National Lottery Distribution Fund) was over committed at 31 July 2020.
- The narrative in the report provides details of awards issued between April and July 2020.

The Board noted the report.

[REDACTED]

7. BUSINESS REPORTING

7.1 Use of Council Seal

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services provided an update. [REDACTED]

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services read the resolution:

The Board of the Arts Council **RESOLVED** that the ACNI Common Seal would be affixed as required, [REDACTED]

Proposed by [REDACTED] and seconded by [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and approved by the Board.

The documents were signed and sealed on behalf of the Council by the two Board members who were in attendance in the Board Room, Linen Hill House, Lisburn.

7.2 Complaints and FOIs

There was nothing of significance to note; the Board were content to take the report as read.

7.3 Finance and Capital Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee carried out the annual review of the Terms of Reference on 19 June 2020 and were content that the document was satisfactory.

The Board approved the Finance and Capital Committee Terms of Reference.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1

8.2 A Board member asked if ACNI had a working relationship with [REDACTED]. The Chief Executive advised currently no, however noted that [REDACTED] was a strong and powerful advocate for their sector. The Chief Executive noted the point raised and agreed that it was an area to explore further.


8.3 Following discussion at the Finance and Capital Committee held on 22 September 2020, a Committee member suggested that it would be good practice to circulate the detailed operational finance accounts schedule to the wider Board for information and include it in future Board papers for noting. The Director of Finance

and Corporate Services agreed to circulate the document presented to the Finance and Capital Committee to the wider Board for information and was content to address any queries raised.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 28 October 2020 at 2pm via Microsoft Teams.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 4.30pm.

Signed: 
John Edmund (Chair)

Date: 28th Oct 2020
28 October 2020