

National Adult Literacy Agency	
Minutes of the NALA Board	
Date:	20 October 2021
Time:	4.30pm-7pm
Venue:	Virtual (Zoom)

Chairperson:	Margaret Kelly (MK)
Present (Charity Trustees):	Maria O’Gorman (M’OG), Frances Ward (FW), Gwen Redmond (GR), Mary Maher (MM), Lynne Keery (LK), Ciaran Casey (CC), Elma Teahan (ET), Catherine Devlin (CD)
Quorum:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
In Attendance (Others):	Colleen Dube (CD), Paul Cahill (PC) (Finance & Corporate Services Manager)
Apologies:	Pat Ayton (PA), Kevin Kelly (KK), Hazel Cryan (HC), Celia Rafferty (CR), Anna Touhy Halligan (ATH)

Approval of the minutes of the meeting on 01 September 2021
The minutes for the meeting held on 01 September 2021 were approved.
Matters arising:
There were no matters arising from the 01 September meeting minutes
Declarations of conflicts of interest:
CD & PC offered to recuse themselves from discussion regarding the 5.1.6 Agenda item “Staff Remuneration and Benefits Proposal”. This was noted by MK.

CEO's Report

CD gave a verbal update to the board on the following subjects;

NALA strategy, Implementation plan and reporting.

CD informed the Board that a strategic review by the management team was undertaken that reviewed the entirety of NALA's work. The purpose of the review was to determine what elements of the strategic plan's work was completed, needed to be completed, needed to be removed or needed to be consolidated with other work.

CD has done further work to refine the findings of the review keeping in mind the objectives of NALA's strategy, priority projects for 2022 and also the implications and opportunities that the 10 years' strategy may offer.

CD proposed that this review and alignment work continue and that the completed review form an appendix to a higher-level document to be brought to the 8 December Board meeting setting out a more cohesive workplan for NALA for 2022.

Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) 10 Year Strategy Update.

CD informed the meeting that a meeting of all NALA staff had taken place to review the 10 Year Strategy and that the priorities emerging from that review session were included in the minutes of the LSP&G sub-committee meeting, with a view to adopting and weaving into NALA's plan for 2022.

In response to MK's question regarding what's happening with the 10 year strategy CD informed the meeting of the following points:

1. CD has had numerous interactions with senior Solas staff to try to assess progress to date,
2. An awareness campaign is in the planning stage, but no details are available. It appears the intention is to use the NALA freephone in this campaign.
3. A SOLAS Director is drafting an implementation plan together for the Strategy.
4. There is not any on the programme office, regional co-ordinators or on funding, though the €3M allocated in the budget may be used towards funding this.

CD's understanding is that a meeting of all stakeholders will most likely be convened before Christmas and that NALA will continue to engage constructively, strategically and proactively with SOLAS on the 10 Year Strategy and will keep the

Chair and the Board updated of all developments.

Update on Tutors Restructuring Proposal

CD gave an update on the status of the restructuring of the tutoring service and explained the background and the basis of a variation to the original proposal.

Three Tutors to date have indicated that they would like to continue to work with NALA in the new role while still advocating for two things;

- a. The retention of Learning Support Worker (LSW) position
- b. A starting salary based at a higher point on the scale in recognition of service.

NALA's revised proposal remains clear that the combined role of Adult Educator is the only role on offer. However, we believe a sliding scale in the starting rate of salary between Pt.2 and Pt.4 is equitable and can be accommodated.

Upon conclusion of CD's update discussion among Board took place to seek clarity on the various elements of the proposal including the following;

- number of tutoring hours,
- payment of salary at 35/37ths of the rate due to a shorter working week
- Entitlement to Privilege Days
- Place of Work and payment of Working from Home Allowance

Upon conclusion of the discussion the Chair asked the meeting to consider the proposal in three separate decisions namely:

1. The starting rates of salary and the prior service required to qualify for each rate.
2. The overall details of the proposal apart from starting salary.
3. The payment of the Working from Home (WFH) Allowance on a pro rata basis.

The meeting's decision was to approve the proposal, specifically approving each of MK's three separate questions as set out above.

CD concluded this section of her report by stating that the final situation in terms of actual redundancies, staff remaining, hours agreed and a summary of the overall

cost of the restructuring will be reported back to the December meeting.

Sub-committee reports and minutes

Audit, Risk Finance Sub-committee:

The minutes of the last meeting held on 06 October were taken as read and approved.

Management accounts: PC presented the September Management Accounts to the meeting. It was noted that these accounts were finalised since the last AR&F meeting which had considered the August Management accounts. In the event of such future timing differences it was proposed that the latest available Management accounts and the Accounts considered by the Sub-Committee will be presented to the Board meeting. This proposal was agreed by the Board.

PC reported that the SOLAS funding was on target and that the Plain English income was ahead of target by €83K. It was noted that EU Project income of €87K expected in 2021 will not be received until after the final report is presented and agreed in February 2022. This income timing difference will create a restricted reserves deficit in 2021 which will be regularised when the income is received in Q1 2022. PC explained that this will not have any effect on our unrestricted reserves or NALA's contingency fund.

In response to MK's question PC confirmed that the costs associated with the proposals being brought to this Board meeting have already been factored into the forecasted results for 2021.

Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) Compliance 2021:

The meeting was presented with CRA Annual report for 2021 and the Compliance Statement for 2021. These documents, having been already reviewed by the AR&F sub-committee and recommended to the Board for approval, were approved by the Board.

Tutoring Service Restructuring Redundancy Costs

This document was reviewed by the AR&F sub-committee at its 6 October meeting and recommended to the Board for approval. The Board, having approved the tutoring service restructuring plan at 4.2 above, approved the fund of €43K in the redundancy calculations document in implementing the restructuring plan.

Staff Remuneration & Benefits Proposals

The Board considered a paper that set out two proposals namely

1. Reducing the waiting period to allow entry to the pension scheme from 2 years' service to one year's service and the provision of employer retirement benefit contributions of 10% of qualifying salary to employees after one year's service instead of two. This proposal results from the 3 March Board decision to make changes to the pension scheme and it is requested that the change be back dated to March 2021.
2. NALA, in aligning its salaries structure to the public service pay structure, agreed to implement future collective bargaining pay agreements, subject to available funding. The Building Momentum Pay Agreement covers the period 2021-2022 and the first phase was due on 1 July and 1 October depending on the pay grade. This provided for an increase of the greater of €500 or 1% of salary for most grades from 1 October. Certain higher grades were due increases from 1 July and once implemented these grades were not entitled to the 1 October increase.

This paper and the underlying calculations were considered by the AR&F meeting of 6 October and recommended to the Board for approval. The Board considered and approved both proposals.

SOLAS Cash Balance review

A paper was presented to the Board for information regarding a request from SOLAS for a refund of 2015 funding amounting to €149,787.

PC informed the Board that an initial review would indicate that NALA do not owe SOLAS any refund regarding its 2015 activity. A more granular review of our finances for 2015 is underway and we will be responding to SOLAS once the review is complete. A further update on this issue will be brought to the next Board meeting.

Landlord Construction Work at Sandford Close Location

PC and CD verbally updated the Board on the proposed demolition and construction work planned in the environs of NALA's office at Sandford Close.

NALA management have sought a meeting with the landlord to determine the impact on NALA's use of its premises during an expected construction period lasting two years. The Landlord's representative declined the initial meeting request stating that they did not have their full construction plan developed at that point and that we would meet once they had all their plans complete.

NALA management are continuing to monitor the situation and will update the Board as the situation develops.

Literacy and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee:

The minutes of the last meeting held on 6 October were discussed.

The minutes showed that the opportunities and priorities detailed in paper 3.1 Update on 10 Year Strategy presented to the sub-committee are recommended to the Board for adoption.

MK detailed to the Board members the eight priorities that the sub-committee recommended to the Board. In addition to the priorities the recommendation was to streamline into three primary areas of;

1. Supporting Furthest behind First
2. Supporting Literacy friendly services through Plain English and Literacy awareness taring.
3. Through Advocacy, Best and emerging Research and Evaluation.

In the ensuing Discussion GR sought clarity on which Learners NALA will provide services to, making the point that some learners do not want to engage formally.

In response MK stated that NALA would refer learners to the ETBs and would seek to provide tailored services to those learners who did not wish to engage with the ETBs and that NALA would add value by stepping into other spaces.

CD made the point that services would need to be more accessible and address the

particular needs of certain learners. The objective being to find the particular triggers to make potential learners want to engage.

CD advocated an approach by NALA that seeks to understand what ETBs and other are doing before undertaking initiatives in order to avoid duplication of effort and resources. MK reinforced this point by stating that NALA is aware that the best interests of the learner are served through local structures.

In concluding the discussion MK asked whether the Board agreed to adopt the priorities detailed in the minutes of the LSP&G 6 October meeting. The board agreed to the adoption and the minutes of the sub-committee approved.

Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee:

The minutes of the last sub-committee meeting were reviewed and three issues were discussed as follows:

1. **The location for learner resources.** This arose as a question at committee level as to where the Marking Progress/Briefing Papers resources should be located. It was agreed that pending further clarification NALA would continue to use its website as a repository for learner resources and that final Marking Progress and Briefing Papers resources will housed there, as both learners and tutors are accustomed to using the NALA directory. It was agreed however that these resources could also be posted on the websites of other agencies such as SOLAS, Adult Literacy for Life Strategy etc.
2. **The high volume of portfolio work from centre- based learners that had to be returned as they did not meet the standard.** CD explained that it was challenging to bring consistency to this expected level of work during COVID. This, in part, has prompted the creation of the Learner support role which will help greatly in gaining insights into the “Learner Journey”. The creation of the new roles of Adult Literacy Educator is also part of the solution. It was agreed that further work in needed to more fully understand and develop the learner validation process.

3. The development of Micro credentials for lower levels of the QQI framework. LK informed the meeting that QQI were engaged in a pilot programme of developing micro credentials at level 5. MK made the point that the more acute need for micro credentials is at the lower end of the framework. It was agreed that the progress of the pilot will be monitored to see what emerges.

The minutes of the sub-committee meeting were approved.

Student Sub-committee

Catherine reported that all was well with the Student committee

Data Protection & GDPR

CD updated the meeting on progress on GDPR work as follows;

- Much has been accomplished by CD/NOC /Mazars
- Risk register items whittled down from 147 to 61
- 61 items further consolidated into 8 key risks
- Risk register to be brought to the Board
- Considerable amount of new documentation, legally only the Data Protection Policy needs to be brought to the Board
- All public facing documentation needs to be PE edited
- Agreed that Data Protection Policy and Privacy Statement will be brought to the Board for approval


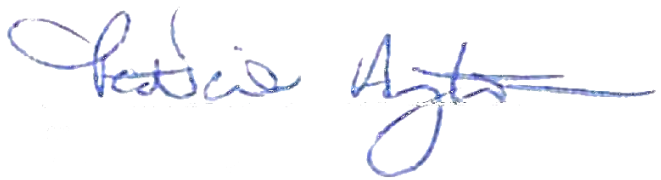
CD further informed the board that:

- All major Risks have been identified
- Major piece of work still needs to be done to plug the gaps in the risk register
- Work on LWN Cookies has been delayed – will be completed by Year End
- Data sharing agreement with QQI is in place
- CD continues to communicate with SOLAS to develop data sharing agreement and regarding PLSS.

Items for noting	
None	
Any other business (AOB):	
<p>As Pat Ayton will not be available for the next ETA sub-committee meeting the Board must appoint a Chair for the meeting. Mary Bambrick has agreed to chair the meeting subject to appointment by the Board.</p> <p>The Board notes Pat's absence and appoints Mary Bambrick as Chair of the next ETA meeting.</p>	

Next Meeting	
Date:	08 December 2021
Time:	TBC – Morning Meeting in Person with Lunch to follow at 2.30pm proposed. CD to arrange Digital poll to determine if this is feasible or desirable for Board members
Venue:	In Sandford Lodge – TBC

Actions Arising from This Meeting:			
Item	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe
Next Meeting	CD to organise Google Poll of Board members to determine the interest in an in-person meeting on December 8 th followed by lunch	Colleen Dube	November 2021

	
Chairperson's Signature and date	Secretary Signature and date
MARGARET KELLY: Dec 8 th 2021	PATRICIA AYTON: Dec 8 th 2021