

National Adult Literacy Agency	
Minutes of the NALA Board	
Date:	29 June 2022
Time:	2.00pm - 4.30pm
Venue:	Spencer Hotel, Excise Walk, International Financial Services Centre, Dublin 1 and Virtual (Zoom)

Chairperson:	Margaret Kelly (MK)
Present (Charity Trustees):	Ciaran Casey (CC), Frances Ward (FW), Maurice Sammon (MS), Eleanor Neff (EN), Trish Nolan (TN), Elma Teahan (ET) (Zoom), Catherine Devlin (CD) (Zoom), Aoife Foley (AF) (Zoom), Tracey Reilly (TR) (Zoom)
Quorum:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
In Attendance (Others):	Colleen Dube (CEO), Paul Cahill (PC) (Finance & Corporate Services Manager), Michelle Reade (MR) (Governance & Compliance Officer), Sinéad Coffey (SC) (NALA Administrator)
Apologies:	Pat Ayton (PA), Maria O’Gorman (MOG), Lynne Keery (LK), Tom O’Mara (TOM)

1. Welcome
MK opened the meeting and welcomed all, particularly new Board Members and Attendees. All Trustees and Attendees introduced themselves.
2. Conflicts of Interest
None
3. Minutes of 27 April 2022 Board meeting
The minutes for the meeting held on 27 April 2022 were approved.
Matters arising
Action 4.3 from 27 April 2022
NOTED:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair (MK) and CEO were to decide most appropriate follow up communication regarding the ALL Strategy. They were aware from previous engagements that the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (the Minister) was due to hold a meeting with SOLAS on the ALL Strategy on 11 May 2022. Following that there were two meetings

between NALA, SOLAS and ETBI to try promote progress.

- In view of those actions they did not write to the Minister as was suggested at the last Board Meeting.
- Since that time, SOLAS have provided role specifications for some roles required under the Strategy:
 - Regional Coordinator roles
 - Program Office team: Director at Principal Officer and 4 Sectoral Leads at Assistant Principal Officer grades
- NALA responded to the specifications and outlined concerns with the overlap between the sectoral leads to SOLAS, ETBI, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (the Department) and the Minister. SOLAS have not changed the approach.
- NALA have not withdrawn their objections but are not opposing these further due to the existing delays in the strategy implementation.

AGREED:

- Chair and CEO to write to Minister in another month if there is not satisfactory progress on the ALL Strategy Implementation.

Action 5.3 from 27 April 2022:

NOTED

- PC checked with Mazars our tax consultants on 28 June 2022 and there is no update from Revenue on the matter. They had requested an update from Revenue a week previously.

Agenda Item 5.4 from 27 April 2022 - SOLAS internal Audit Update

NOTED:

- PC provided an update:
 - BDO have contacted NALA in relation to the SOLAS Internal Audit
 - CEO and PC have met with a consultant from BDO
 - BDO are to review our funding application and reporting for the year 2021
 - NALA are currently providing the necessary files for their review
 - No issues anticipated.

4. CEO's Report

4.1 2022 Draft Work Plan and Implementation Framework

NOTED:

- CEO gave a brief explanation of the 2022 Work Plan and Implementation Framework document to the new Board Members and encouraged any questions to be raised. CEO explained that important matters or issues from the Work Plan will be raised at the Board meetings.
- The following items were highlighted for the Boards consideration and/or approval:
 1. Chair to write to the Minister seeking reply to request for meeting of 6 April
 - CEO noted this has been covered under Matters Arising.
 2. Consider ESNB request to host 2024 conference
 - Discussion held on benefits, costs and other considerations
 - MK sought approval in principle to make further enquiries and to seek funds from SOLAS.
 3. Update on Budget reallocations
 - Budget surpluses are projected in 2022's Research budget (€30k) and our Furthest Behind First Project budget (€34k)
 - Rather than return it, NALA would like to find an alternative use for it, subject to approval. SOLAS confirmed a reallocation of the funds is possible
 - NALA propose the following:
 - Research Budget: No current research needs. Use this surplus to publish and disseminate ESOL resources due to the Ukrainian situation and related requests from ETBs for this.
 - Furthest Behind First Budget: Originally budgeted for two new members of staff, one is starting with NALA in July. Due to delays it is not feasible to hire another. Reallocate this funding to:
 - travel expenses of the new Literacy and Development Outreach Worker as this is a requirement for the role
 - travel expenses of literacy student ambassadors who will work collaboratively with the Outreach Work engaging with other learners.

4. Consider NALA publishing a 2022-2023 Statement of Strategy including commissioning 3rd party / parties to undertake an evaluation of the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan and support the development of a new 5 year strategic 2024 - 2029 plan in 2023.

- MK not in favour of commissioning an evaluation at this time and made an alternative proposal:
 - As NALA have already revised our Strategic Plan as part of our mid-term review, publish on the website with our revised objectives
 - At the end of the year, publish our progress report to keep our stakeholders informed
 - Do not publish a further strategic plan until there is more certainty around the implementation of the ALL Strategy.
- CC enquired if this would mean we would have no strategic plan in 2023. CEO advised that much of the work on our current Work Plan will continue into 2023. Work on the Strategic Plan for the remainder of 2023 to 2028 would commence early in 2023.

5. Pay and Conditions update and proposal.

- SC left the meeting for this agenda item.
- CEO provided a summary for new Board Members on NALA's pay, how it aligns to the public sector and historic changes to pay and alignment.
- As of 1 July 2022 Public Sector staff are returning to pre-Haddington Road working hours (35 instead of the current 37 hour work week). It is anticipated that it will be requested by the Union in NALA that we realign to this public sector arrangement which would require NALA staff salaries to be increased by 2/37ths.
- NALA has a surplus in our core salaries budget due to staff leave and part time arrangements
- PC circulated an additional paper to those in the room. This paper showed the current pay for all NALA staff and the costs associated with the proposed changes.
- CEO summarised the 2 current anomalies NALA has regarding pay:
 1. NALA Administration Staff are currently aligned with local authority salary grades rather than general civil service scales. The proposal is now to align them with the Civil Service grade of Executive Officer (EO) and, in the case of one staff member, to the grade of Higher Executive Officer (HEO). The point on each scale to reflect the appropriate point in relation to the staff member's current salary, that does not necessitate a deduction in pay..
 - Board discussed to ensure all were clear on the proposal and costs.
 - Proposal was approved.

2. All NALA staff are currently paid 35/37ths of their equivalent public sector salary scale. To remain aligned to public sector pay NALA staff would need a pay rise.

- A review was undertaken by CEO and PC of the benefits and leave of NALA staff compared to public sector to establish if there is a basis for providing NALA with any mitigating cost savings to offset any necessary pay increase. NALA's leave, including the privilege days, is not as generous as the public sector, therefore no basis for any offset of costs exist.
- CEO highlighted the costs associated with the pay increase
- MK questioned if we had the budget and CEO referred back to the previous point that we have a surplus this year. The cost of providing the increase is €45,594 and we are projecting a surplus in the salaries budget of €41,000
- CEO explained that NALA would still need to raise this with SOLAS before we could use the budget for this purpose
- Proposal is to request approval from SOLAS to use the surplus budget to pay the increase associated with maintaining alignment.
- Proposal was approved.

AGREED:

- Approval in Principle received on holding the 2024 ESNB conference subject to logistics / resources. NALA must make further enquiries and seek budget approval to hold the 2024 ESNB conference
- Reallocate the Research Budget to ESOL Resources
- Reallocate the Furthest Behind First Budget to travel and subsistence for the Literacy and Development Outreach Worked and student ambassadors.
- Publish current strategic objectives and provide progress report at year end to provide visibility to stakeholders. Commence Strategic Planning in 2023 for a 5 year period aligned to the ALL Strategy Implementation
- Migrate Administration staff from Local Authority Pay Scales to General Civil Service scales in line with all other NALA staff
- Contact SOLAS regarding the use of the 2022 Salary Budget surplus to realign staff to public sector pay. Also raise with them that an increased budget for salaries would be needed in 2023 to maintain this alignment.

5. Subcommittees – minutes, documentation and items for decision

5.1 Literacy and Staff Policies and Governance Subcommittee

5.1.1 Draft Minutes of June 2022 Incorporal Meeting

NOTED:

The Minutes were noted.

Matters arising:

Item 3. NALA Constitution and Procedural Rules

NOTED:

- MK and CEO summarised the recommendations in the LSPG minutes regarding terms/clauses in the constitution and procedural rules that are proposed to be amended subject to legal advice.
- Board considered and discussed each item individually.

AGREED:

- NALA to seek advice on all terms/clauses and revert to Board on a proposed new constitution.

5.1.2 Staff Handbook

NOTED:

- CEO provided background to the Staff Handbook.
- MK noted an issue with the timelines outlined in the investigation procedure of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment policies that needs to be updated.
- MK and CEO then went through the specific items raised for careful consideration and approval:
 - Time In Lieu
 - Sick Leave Policy (updated to incorporate other wellness, wellbeing and biological issues without naming them specifically, such as Menopause)
 - Paid Certified Sick Leave for staff still on probation
 - Paid Leave for Maternity, Paternity and Adoptive Leave
 - Compassionate Leave aligned to Public Sector Policy
 - Update to Unpaid Leave Policy to allow salaries to be spread over 12 months
 - Recruitment competitions to remain open competitions
 - Provision for Drug Testing removed

- CEO and MR summarised other updates made to the Handbook
- CEO noted are still some further formatting and wording revisions to be made. With upcoming legislation changes expected another version is likely to be done before the end of the year. MK added that legal advice will be sought on the Sick Leave Policy also on the possibility of clarifying the position on termination of employment where all sick leave entitlements and reasonable accommodations have been made unsuccessfully.

AGREED:

- The Staff Handbook was approved subject to the timelines in the investigation procedure of the Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment policies being updated
- NALA to seek legal advice on the Sick Leave Policy.

5.2 Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee

5.2.1 Draft Minutes of 13 June 2022 meeting

NOTED:

The Minutes were noted.

Matters Arising:

NOTED:

- MK noted an issue raised in the minutes regarding quorum, there are currently only two NALA Board members on the subcommittee but the terms of reference (TOR) says it should be three.
- A discussion was held on whether the TOR should be changed or whether there was anyone from the Board willing to put themselves forward for the Subcommittee.

AGREED:

- AF provisionally put herself forward subject to further conversations with NALA staff on the scope and training available.

5.2.2 Management Accounts

NOTED:

- PC provided a brief financial update since last Board Meeting
- Management accounts were noted.

AGREED:

- MK advised she has drafted a letter to SOLAS raising the issue of funding being received in arrears rather than in advance for consideration by NALA staff. Will be brought to Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee to agree by mid-July.

5.2.3 Recommended with Minor Modification for Approval

1. Risk Register

NOTED:

- MK raised the scoring on two risks relating to the Board and observed that the score seemed particularly high.
- These risks were reflecting a new CEO and high Board turnover at the time of initial raising (Risk 6 and 8). Since that time, there has been significant interest from NALA members in joining the Board and the CEO is settled in the role.

AGREED:

- Feedback raised by TOM to be addressed internally in NALA
- Risk 6 and 8 to be rescored.
- Risk Register approved subject to risks 6 and 8 being rescored.

2. Trustee Code of Conduct

APPROVED

3. Customer Charter

APPROVED

4. Reserves Policy

APPROVED

5. Insurance Cover

NOTED – Cyber Insurance price going up and there are fewer sellers. The best value was achieved with the existing quote / premium in light of the limited underwriting options.

6. Gifts Policy

AGREED:

- Gifts for departing Board Members to be removed from the Policy and replaced with the

allowance of up to €200 provide a gift to departing Students who serve on the Student Subcommittee.

- Gift Policy approved subject to the agreed amendment being made.

5.2.4 Recommended with Substantial Modifications For Approval

1. Health and Safety Policy Statement

APPROVED

5.3 Education, Training and Assessment Subcommittee

5.3.1 Draft Minutes of June 2022 Incorporal Meeting

NOTED:

The Minutes were noted.

Matters Arising

5.3.2 Recommended for Approval

1. Learner Admissions Procedure

Board sought clarity on the ages of learners mentioned in the procedure and the requirement for Garda Vetting. CEO clarified the age restrictions and confirmed we have had the necessary staff Garda vetted.

AGREED:

- The Learners Admissions Procedure was approved

5.4 Student Subcommittee

5.4.1 Student Subcommittee minutes

NOTED:

- The Student Subcommittee minutes were noted
- CD provided update on the latest activities of the Subcommittee
- MS mentioned two members who had left the Subcommittee
- MK recommended that discretion is given to NALA to pay costs covering the Subcommittee attending the Ploughing Championships
- MS raised the difficulty of finding accommodation at the Ploughing Championship, irrespective of costs. CEO would see what can be done whether NALA can provide support.

8. Any other Business

MS raised the Creative Writing Zoom Classes he had attended and questioned the benefit of certifying the course. Board discussed. No actions arising.

CEO outlined that at the end of a Board meeting, an evaluation form would be circulated. As in the meeting was conducted in person and there are 6 new members CEO asked for feedback at the end. The feedback was positive.

Next Meeting



Date: 28 September 2022

Time: 4.30 pm

Venue: Virtual via Zoom

Actions Arising from This Meeting:

Item	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe
3.	Chair and CEO to write to Minister if there is not satisfactory progress on the ALL Strategy Implementation	MK/CEO	July 2022
4.1.5	Contact SOLAS regarding reallocation of budgets	CEO/PC	July-Sept 2022
5.1.1.	NALA to seek advice on all terms/clauses and revert to Board on a proposed new constitution.	CEO	July-Sept 2022
5.1.2	NALA to seek legal advice on Sick Leave Policy and revert to the Board	CEO	July-Sept 2022
5.2.1	AF to consider joining the Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee	AF	July-Sept 2022
5.2.2	MK to send draft letter to SOLAS regarding on-time funding to Audit, Risk and Finance Subcommittee	MK	Mid-July 2022
5.2.3.1	NALA to amend the Risk Register	CEO/PC	July 2022
5.2.3.6	NALA to amend the Gifts Policy	CEO/PC	July 2022

 28 September 2022	 28 September 2022
Chairperson's Signature and date	Secretary Signature and date
MARGARET KELLY	PATRICIA AYTON

