

Retired Teachers' Association (NI)

Minutes of 66th Annual General Meeting
held at Corick House, Clogher, Co. Tyrone
Wednesday, 22nd October 2008 at 11.00am

Welcome

Chairman, Robina Atkinson welcomed guests and members from all eleven branches to the meeting and thanked Kim Silkstone, Financial Solutions, for generously sponsoring the tea/coffee and scones on arrival and Nichola Pearce, Adelaide Insurance, for the kind donation of £100 towards AGM costs.

Robina was particularly pleased to be wearing the newly-supplied Chairman's Chain of Office. Members' attention was then drawn to the fact that there are now more over-50s than under-16s.

Apologies

(in no particular order)

Anne O'Reilly, Chief Executive Age Concern
Eddie McArdle, General Teaching Council
Rupert Alterskye, West Yorkshire
James Bell, Prehen, North-West Branch
Fern Turner, National Association of Head Teachers
D.E. and M.T. Magill, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim
Ivy Humes, Omagh, Co. Tyrone
Valerie McKee, Fergus Press, Ballyclare
Iris Clarke, Executive Representative Tyrone Branch
Eleanor Spence, Gilford, Co. Down
Helen McIlroy
Mary Marley, Secretary South-Down Branch
Nichola Pearce, Adelaide Insurance Belfast
Margaret Galloway, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Fred Brown, President NASUWT
Oswald Jamison, recent Hon. Sec. RTA

Guests Present

(in no particular order)

Eamon Quinn and Jacqueline Hinds, DENI Pensions Branch
Kim Silkstone, Financial Solutions Bangor
Damian Walls, WELB Representative INTO
Melanie Houston, President UTU
Richard Adams, Ass. Gen. Sec. ATL

RTA Present

(in no particular order)

Executive Committee	16 members
Belfast Branch	9 members
Mid-Antrim Branch	5 members
Mid-Ulster Branch	15 members
Craigavon Branch	3 members
North-West Branch	4 members
North-Down Branch	6 members
Tyrone Branch	14 members
East-Down Branch	2 members
South-Down Branch	4 members
Fermanagh Branch	17 members
North-East Branch	13 members

Total number present 114

Minutes

The Minutes of the 65th AGM, held in October 2007, were proposed as a correct record by Chris Wilson and seconded by Robert Thompson. They were adopted unanimously.

Executive Report

Hon. Secretary outlined the general business of the two Executive Meetings held during the year:

- March 2008, to approve a Chain of Office for the Chair, evaluate our association, the progress of the website and our membership of Age Concern and PSPC;
- September 2008, to organise and prepare for this AGM.

Ian Dixon proposed and Robert Pinkerton seconded the adoption of this report.

Age Concern

In the absence of Anne O'Reilly Chief Executive Age Concern, Renée McClelland drew members' attention to the forthcoming merger of ACNI with Help The Aged. This merger would be completed by 2011 and would go under the interim name 'New Charity'. The transitional working party would eventually become a Board which would appoint a Chairperson and Chief Executive. A consultative forum of stakeholders would be established whose remit would be to research into the opinions of older people and campaign with statutory bodies for much needed reforms.

From the ACNI Annual Impact Report 2007/2008, Renée stressed that ACNI would continue to challenge government to develop and protect front-line services that are needs-driven and monitor closely the work of policy makers, politicians and the Assembly on the major strategic points on which so much depends. Where aspirations versus delivery, it was increasingly more important for local government to meet targets involving the welfare of older people.

The motion to continue this year's ACNI corporate membership fee of £100 and adopt the Age Concern Report was proposed by Robert Pinkerton and seconded by Isobel McKenna.

Robert Pinkerton spoke in praise of the continuing great work done by Renée with Age Concern and, on behalf of the membership of RTANI and the members present at the AGM, thanked her for her commitment to representing the interests of retired teachers.

PSPC

Des Rawlings emphasised the importance of our continued membership of the Public Services Pensioners' Council. This membership cost only £183 per annum but, in these times of economic difficulty, the issue is more about defense of what we, as pensioners, actually have. Des stated that the RTANI is one of the many organisations of retired public sector employees which make up the PSPC and their representations on our behalf are of the utmost importance.

Brendan McGlone proposed and Isobel McKenna seconded the adoption of the PSPC Report and our continued corporate membership of PSPC.

Financial Report

From the 2008 AGM Report, Hon. Treasurer outlined the association's financial position.

Des Rawlings proposed and Robert Pinkerton seconded the adoption of the Financial Report.

RTA Website

From the AGM Report, Hon. Secretary stated that our website was up and running and had attracted almost 500 hits. It contained 15 pages with events, information, contact details, AGM minutes and photographs, a history of the RTA, past officers, new members, the constitution etc.

Secretary

From the AGM Report, Hon. Secretary drew members' attention to the main areas which included:

- Attempts to boost attendance at the AGM;
- Attracting new members from the large number of newly-retired teachers;
- Welcoming the sixty new members to RTA since the last AGM.

Margaret Pinkerton proposed and Hazel Dunford seconded the adoption of the Secretary's Report.

Adoption of Reports

In proposing that all reports should be adopted, Chris Wilson thanked Hon. Sec. for carrying on his work for RTA during the tragedy of a family bereavement coinciding with his house being flooded. Robert Thompson asked the meeting to echo this sentiment. The motion was seconded by J.W. Calderwood.

Appointment of Hon. Auditor

Robina Atkinson proposed and Robert Thompson seconded continuing with Patricia Halliday.

Election of Officers

President, Robert Thompson reminded members that all offices were now vacant and would be filled by nominations.

Before nominations were offered for election, Des Rawlings paid fitting tribute to the work of outgoing Chairman, Robina Atkinson. A particular example was when there was no Gen. Sec. Robina took the reins and, coping extremely well, brought the RTA through a difficult and demanding transitional period. During her several years as Chairman, Robina had been fully committed and unstinting in her work and Des was certain that the assembled members would agree that it would be disadvantageous to lose her experience. Accordingly, Des proposed that Robina should be called upon to fill a vacancy in the co-opted membership of the C.E.C. which would be discussed after the AGM. This was agreed unanimously. Des then presented Robina with a floral tribute on behalf of the association.

President	Robert Thompson	Not up for re-election	<i>Continuing</i>
Chairman	Des Rawlings	Proposed by Robina Atkinson Seconded by Robert Pinkerton	<i>Elected</i>
Vice-Chair	Mary Marley	Proposed by Des Rawlings Seconded by Marion O'Hanlon	<i>Elected</i>
Secretary	Brendan McGlone	Not up for re-election	<i>Continuing</i>
Robert informed members that the three co-opted Executive Representatives remained as; Sandra Savage Ian Dixon Colm Lambe			<i>Continuing</i>

Fraternal Greetings

Eamon Quinn, DENI, assured members that it was his privilege to serve the 19,000 retired teachers in Northern Ireland. He mentioned forthcoming changes including the move to E.S.A. and that there was no longer any certainty about several issues which would have been taken for granted, for example, ill-health procedures, actuarially-reduced pensions for future retired teachers. Eamon was presented with a token of RTA appreciation for the invaluable work he and his team carry out on our behalf.

Melanie Houston, UTU, expressed concern that the uncertainty about the transfer procedure was overshadowing other educational concerns and needs. She also stated that attention should be focused on teachers' health and well-being. This could be addressed, for example, by employing extra staff, smaller teaching groups, improving the balance between work and life. Education in Finland, she added, based on equality and trust, meant that teachers were confident in their jobs and were not in a state of ever-changing initiatives. She called for a return to stability and to trusting teachers as professionals.

Richard Adams, ATL, positively reminded us that, in spite of rapid changes, the replacement of ELBs, the revised curriculum, the enhanced curriculum, the transfer procedure and on-going unease of teachers facing challenging pupil behaviour, teaching was still an enjoyable profession.

Damien Walls, INTO, declared that it cost government £40 million to pay for the added years' pension enhancements and that newly-retired teachers would be on much lower pensions. The INTO and UTU are moving towards a federation, he stated, which should assist unity. He invited members to attend a conference in November on establishment abuse of teachers. The government had been moving educational goalposts but, in an age of money shortage, reduced grants, rationalisation, closures, academic selection, the transfer procedure, rising expenses etc, he urged the participation of more young people into the management of teachers' business.

Kim Silkstone, Financial Solutions, alerted members to the notion that high street banking was only about profit and that, in a recent survey, 80% of people were reluctant to change their bank. The current credit crunch did provide an opportunity for the public to rethink their banking habits. He invited members to take part in a survey and offered his services on financial matters, particularly where retired teachers might have savings.

Valerie McKee, Fergus Press, Ballyclare, was thanked for the work her company does in producing the AGM Report and was presented, in absentia, with a token of RTA appreciation.

Announcements

2009 AGM was set for Wednesday, 21st October at the same venue, Corick House, Clogher.

AOB

Des thanked everyone for attending and mentioned that the question of the venue for the AGM would be examined for the 2010 AGM but that Corick House would be a high hurdle to reach. In any case, a sub-committee would be formed to look at this subject.
He closed the meeting at 12.30pm for lunch.

Addendum (for C.E.C. only)

Following the AGM, a quorum of CEC members was declared suitable for a meeting to vote on co-opting a 4th member to the Central Executive Committee. Robina Atkinson was proposed as this 4th co-opted member by Robert Pinkerton and seconded by Ian Dixon. Robina accepted the position.

Chairman Des Rawlings suggested that Fermanagh would be entitled to Executive representation and that Craigavon was already represented on CEC, thanks to Margaret Kennedy's recent election to this post.

At a meeting of Branch Secretaries on funding, it was agreed that each branch should receive an allowance of £2 per branch member but that this figure should be applied with consideration to the number of members actually attending events to avoid an unnecessarily large surplus of funds. Training in ICT was mentioned by one of the secretaries as being beneficial for future secretaries.