

RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NORTHERN IRELAND

Minutes of 73rd Annual General Meeting held at Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone
Wednesday, 14th October 2015 at 11.00am

- Welcome* Chairperson, Sandra Savage welcomed guests and members and gave a list of apologies. Chair drew members' attention to our logo which has appeared on the Platinum Finance banner alongside UTU, INTO and NIPSA. Nichola Pearce, Cornmarket Insurance, Belfast and Platinum Finance, Belfast were thanked for their sponsorship of the tea/coffee & scones on arrival and the Ulster Tatler for the photographs and publicity which would appear in the November 2015 edition. Sandra emphasised that coaches to the Annual Conference remain an option and that the Executive Committee strongly recommend this service to branch members wishing to attend the conference.
- Guests Present* Linda Robinson, Chief Executive Officer, Age N.I.
Evelyn Collins, Age NI
Julie Orr, President, Ulster Teachers' Union
Gerry Murphy, Northern Secretary, Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Annette Currie, Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Margaret Anderson, Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Lucy Shiells, Platinum Financial Planning Ltd. (sponsor)
Alan Tolson, Platinum Financial Planning Ltd. (sponsor)
- Apologies* Dr. Carmel Gallagher, Registrar, General Teaching Council
Jim Clarke, CEO, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
Eddie Lynch, Age Sector Platform Northern Ireland
Nichola Pearce, Cornmarket Teachers' Insurance (sponsor)
Colm Lambe, Vice-Chair Executive Committee
Dorothy McIlmoyle, Central Executive Committee
A.V. Flanagan, Omagh
Linda Millar, Kells
James Bell, Derry
Alan Fitzgerald, Belfast
Kay O'Neill, Omagh
Mable Bell, Belfast
Moyra Martin, Limavady
Joan Little, Londonderry
Harriet Little, Londonderry
Elizabeth Whiteside, Londonderry
Stephana Young, Londonderry
Elizabeth Hall, Bangor
Elizabeth Smyth, Portstewart
June Houston, Craigavon
Moirra Gribbon, Portrush
- 2014 Minutes* The Minutes of the 72nd AGM, held on Wednesday, 15th October 2014, already tabled, were taken as read. No matters were arising. The Executive Committee Report, Financial Report and Hon. Secretary's Report, already tabled, were taken as read. No matters were arising. Chris Wilson proposed and Mary Marley seconded the adoption of all reports. All reports were adopted.
- Branches* Chair stated that she had been responding to queries from members in those branches without secretaries and, in an attempt to re-invigorate those branches, Hon. Sec. had mailed every member of North-West, Mid-Antrim, and Craigavon Branches with an invitation to meet at a suitable venue in the hope of finding a solution either by way of a secretary or a group in a secretariat to get social activities and events back on track. Unfortunately, this proved unsuccessful but Executive Committee has plans for a Christmas Buffet for the 170 Craigavon Branch

members which, they were hoping, would draw interest in reviving the branch. Sandra emphasised that there would be absolutely no obligation for any member to take on responsibility at this planned buffet and drew members' attention to the fact that all the secretarial work previously associated with a mail-shot had been removed from this post by the Hon. Sec. through the services of Postalsort.

DENI

In outlining the dispute with DENI, Hon. Sec explained that, over the last forty years or so, we had received the list of newly-retired teachers from DENI which enabled us to invite those retirees to become members of RTA. This year, however, DENI refused to send it as they declared that it was in breach of the Data Protection Act. Hon. Sec. questioned this and requested a meeting with SMT at DENI, Londonderry but, after several weeks received a telephone call from Mr. Brian Quinn stating that the decision was final and that there was nothing that could be done about it.

Hon. Sec. then wrote to the Minister for Education, John O'Dowd MLA requesting a meeting with him. Once again, this meeting was refused. When Hon. Sec. protested that other non-statutory organisations freely receive this list, the Minister gave a thoroughly unsatisfactory and unprofessional response.

Hon. Sec. then wrote to the Stormont Education Committee who within a few days replied that the case had been placed on their agenda for discussion at the next scheduled meeting, that is, on Wednesday 14th October.

Constitution

Chair, Sandra Savage, explained and clarified the reasoning behind the amendments to the constitution. The following six amendments which had been previously discussed and approved by CEC were examined:

- The President will be elected for 5 years but will be eligible for re-election after this period;
- The Chair will be required to retire from office after 3 years but will be eligible for re-election after this period;
- The retiring Chairperson will retain a seat on the CEC for up to a further 3 years;
- The Hon. Secretary/Treasurer will be appointed by the CEC for 3 years but will be eligible for re-appointment;
- The CEC may nominate members of the Committee to represent the RTA on external bodies for a period not exceeding 3 years, during which time they will be required to provide information to the Chairperson or Hon. Sec. for inclusion in each CEC Meeting and a written report for the AGM;
- Audited accounts and Branch AGM Minutes are to be presented at this meeting (Branch AGM) and copies forwarded to the Association Treasurer/Secretary in June.

With no matters arising, Robina Atkinson proposed and Eugene Magill seconded the adoption of all six amendments which were subsequently passed unanimously by the members.

President

Iris Clarke, President, explained to members that as a result of these changes to the Constitution, there would be no elections this year as all officers were in place. Iris then introduced all the committee members and officers by having them stand up for everyone to see who they were.

Linda Robinson

Chief Executive Officer Age NI, Linda Robinson first of all paid tribute to some members she was already acquainted with including Renée McClelland and Eugene Magill with whom she had worked in Age Concern.

Linda's addressed members in two presentations; an overview of the organisation and the work it does and a presentation on Transforming Your Care. To assist in this and to provide members with reference material for study afterwards, she had brought along packs comprising information booklets, published by Age NI, on: Talking Shop; Finding The Right Care Home; Support To Help You Live More Independently At Home; A Guide To Keeping Well, Warm And In Touch For Older People; Different Types Of Housing To Suit Your Needs and A Guide To Claiming Benefits For People Over Pension Age.

Linda described the merger in 2009/2010 between Age Concern and Help The Aged to form Age NI and also to provide a more effective voice on issues that impact on older people, in particular carers and the big issue of care in cases of dementia. She explained that at one time, care had been universally available and was usually in place for 28 hours per week but now it is limited to a mere 15 minutes per day. Noticeable also is the situation for carers where as care inevitably increases, so does the social isolation of the carer.

The following points were addressed and discussed in her presentation:

- It is the carer's right to have an assessment for care at home;
- Peer-to-peer support is of great importance especially for male carers;
- Very often, the television is the only company older people have when at home;

- Age NI can assist in befriending services, that is, someone who simply pops in on a daily basis;
- The four main churches in NI are getting involved in this concern in December in Armagh Cathedral;
- Radio Ulster's 'On Your Behalf' is running a programme on positive, interactive opportunities;
- A Consultation Forum comprising fifty people from all over Northern Ireland will be sharing experiences and asking the question to our MLAs 'Did you ask older people?'
- MLAs will now be kept constantly informed about the views of older people;
- The importance of art and music in the treatment and management of dementia sufferers;
- Average life expectancy will increase in Northern Ireland from 81 years now to 85 years in 2032;
- Older people (65+) form 12% (312,900) of the population nowadays but that will increase to a staggering 63% (455,700) by 2033;
- Whereas a home-help and home-cooked food was the norm twenty years ago, now meals prepared in advance and re-heated are offered during an inadequate 15-minute call-in;
- Many people are unaware of their entitlements and Age NI would welcome more calls from older people and their carers regarding these statutory benefits.
- Things to look for in choosing a care-home;
- Carefully reading a care-home's quality-assurance reports carefully and comparing them to others;
- Checking whether or not top-up fees apply;
- Visiting a prospective care-home several times to get a true picture;
- Making a plan to manage the transition from home to care-home;
- The importance of being inquisitive and asking questions like what does dementia care look like.

At the end of Linda's address, several members with both personal and general questions sought advice from her and were either given immediate answers or invited to discuss the particular situation privately.

Hon. Sec. stated that he would organise a brand new page on the association's website specifically dedicated to Age NI. Linda offered the services of her colleague at the office to facilitate this.

Chair, Sandra Savage, thanked Linda for her magnificent contribution to the annual conference and on being able to throw much-needed light on many of the issues about which members had concerns.

Sandra then presented her with a Belfast Crystal plaque inscribed with the RTANI logo as well as a substantial bouquet of flowers.

Julie Orr President, Ulster Teachers' Union, Julie Orr, thanked the association for the invitation and stated that she found the advice and material from Linda's address and the presentation packs very useful. Julie expressed the hope that she too would become a member of RTANI on her retirement.

AOB Robert Thompson, past President, requested that the Executive Committee might examine the possibility of the Annual Conference taking place on another day rather than a Wednesday. It was agreed to look at this at our next Executive Committee Meeting.

Announcements The next Annual Conference was set for Wednesday, 19th October 2016, at the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown when it is hoped that the Commissioner for Older People, Claire Keatinge would be our guest and there would again be a platform for Questions & Answers on issues mentioned in her address.

There being no further business, Chairperson Sandra Savage duly closed the meeting for lunch at 12.50pm.