

RANDALSTOWN ARCHES ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Monday 15th November 2021
ARCHES House

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies: Christine Butler, Eileen Ingram, Hazel Cameron, Joe McErlean, Martin Hackett, Jane McTaggart, Sheelagh Hillan, Helen Boyd, Brian McGookin

Present: George Graham, Willie Allen, Moore Blair, Peter Boyle, Sharon Graham, Liam Hurrell, Sinéad McIvor, Ergnat McLaughlin, Noel McMullan, Stephen Nicholl, Stewart Wilson, Oonagh Heatley

In Attendance:

Celine Corrigan, Corrigan & Co
Kerry Brady, ANBC

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM

Minutes of the previous AGM of 20th November 2019, were accepted as a true record

Proposed Sheelagh Hillan

Seconded Willie Allen

3. MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising.

4. CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Good evening to everyone here tonight and to those joining us via zoom. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2022 annual general meeting. Every effort has been made to ensure proceedings run smoothly. However, if there are any technology issue, a recording will be available by request from the office after the close of this meeting.

A year ago, we were still faced with so much uncertainty with a rapidly spreading pandemic. Our lives since have changed irreversibly. The pandemic not only shocked us because it made us face the unimaginable but also temporarily took away what we considered to be ours forever, like the freedom to move, to travel, to meet, to work in our offices, to go to the cinema or theatre, to go shopping.

It made us feel vulnerable, made us realise that we are not invincible. We took refuge in our homes and merged our analogue and digital lives into a single life. As individuals, families, and companies, large or small, we had to lose the fear of digitalisation.

Our office team however were both resilient and inventive and tried to ensure the pandemic has as minimal impact on us as possible.

Each week of confinement accelerated the passage of time by a year, so that we emerged from the pandemic in a different world. The way we work, interact with to each other, entertain ourselves, shop, inform ourselves is already different and will never be the same again.

The internet, social networks, platforms, and devices have changed the way we engage with each other and engage with the community. The office team continually keep all our social media channels up to date with information for the community, events, and courses. The challenge now is to not forget those in our community isolated from these forms of communication.

ARCHES Board of Directors

Throughout 2022 I was assisted on the Board by Peter Boyle (Vice Chair); Eileen Ingram (secretary); William Allen (Treasurer); Moore Blair (Assistant Treasurer); Helen Boyd; Christine Butler; Sheelagh Hillan; Martin Hackett; Liam Hurrell; Joseph McErlean; Brian McGookin and Jane McTaggart

I would like to thank the directors of ARCHES who have worked with me and supported me throughout the year. I am proud of the way we adapted to rapidly changed circumstances and the way the Board embraced the world of video conferencing to allow monthly meetings to continue, although we were very pleased to have held in person meetings from April. Without them we could not operate, and I thank them for giving up their time and for their advice and general input into our organization.

ARCHES Staff

During 2022 the board was assisted by: - Hannah Moloney, *Operations Manager* who oversees the work we do and manages the staff and business interests of Arches, she also took on the role of the accounts and keeping the day-to-day books in good order after Brian retired last year. She now works closely with Willie Allen to keep Arches in tip top shape. Unfortunately, Hannah was diagnosed with cancer earlier this year and she continues to work from home whilst she receives medical treatments. We wish her all the very best with her treatments and hope she is back to good health very soon.

Sinead McIvor, *Training and Media Administrator* looks after the running of courses, events, and our social media platforms, and I must take this opportunity to give Sinead a special word of thanks who has taken up a lot of extra work whilst Hannah has attended medical appointments or been too unwell to attend in person events, especially at Festival this year. Sinead did a fantastic job of running this, a giant-feet in itself even more so with it being the first one post pandemic.

Owen McClurkin, *Finance and Office Assistant* who joined us from a work placement through USEL and works alongside Hannah inputting accounts data and assisting Sinead with admin tasks.

Ergnat McLaughlin, *Caretaker and Property Manager* looks after all our properties and carries out regular maintenance; We had a difficult period ending with the eviction of one of our long-term tenants and subsequent court hearing and prison sentence for the tenant. This was stressful for all involved but I would like to thank Ergnat for continuing in his duties even when he wanted to quit. He has now renovated the property and a new tenant will be moving in next week.

Mary Robb, *Cleaner* makes sure that ARCHES is spick and span!

We also had Ann McGuiness, *Project Manager for 'Well Hello'* – our over 50's Monday club, Ann resigned in September after more than 20 years working for Arches. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ann for all her hard work and dedication to the Randalstown community over the years. She will be greatly missed but has promised to stay in touch.

I on behalf of the Board would like to thank you all for what you have already done the past three years of Covid. To get our charity prepared to cope with this situation and forge a way forward to now get on with living in a post pandemic world. Your quiet but determined resolve and for the most part good humour, have seen our businesses function as near to normal as is possible and in fact start to thrive once more. As challenging as things become this winter, our group is built on solid foundations and at its heart are many people who care passionately about their community. Your commitment makes all the difference.

ARCHES Facilities

As of next week, the residential areas of ARCHES House and ARCHES Mews are back to being fully occupied. Our commercial property is currently fully occupied however one of our tenants is moving out at the end of the month so we will have commercial unit available in Arches Lane.

Our community spaces had some obvious restrictions on usage for parts of the year however we are delighted to see groups and courses running once again and often all rooms are booked weeks in advance and it can be hard to get a booking in if you're not early to the diary! We also continue to support some of the groups with technical assistance in using video conferencing.

We receive funding from Department for Communities and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council for the running of our community hub and we are extremely grateful for this support.

ARCHES Events / Seasonal Activities

As I have already mentioned Sinead did a wonderful job of running this year's festival. We agreed early on that we would very much like to have as many in person events as was safe to do so, although we recognised people were still cautious of large-scale events and we had a reduced staff, so Festival was called back a little this year. However, it was so good to see it return to the streets of Randalstown, to see families and the community all out together to enjoy the entertainment really brought a smile to many faces.

The Christmas Lights Switch on will be held at the end of this week in collaboration with Antrim and Newtownabbey council. We are sure this will also be a great success and be a great opportunity for community to come together and celebrate the season of good cheer.

ARCHES Courses

ARCHES courses continue to be popular not only with the people in Randalstown but in surrounding areas too. We now have students attending regular courses from right across Northern Ireland. This is a testament to the quality of training we offer and the relaxed learning environment we provide. Many students comment on how well they like the centre and the facilities on offer.

Our courses however were not immune to the effects of the pandemic, but we were able to adapt and work with online platforms to continue to deliver the high-quality training the community has come to expect from us.

The pandemic offered us the opportunity to reflect on the training we have provided over the years. In our 25-year history we have offered training opportunities for 22 of those years. Training a total of 10,236 students in 40 different subjects. I was personally astounded at this total – having been on the Board for the full 25 years it has been amazing to see a tiny seed of an idea bloom into the training programme we offer today.

We have seen uptake dwindle a little this autumn and coming into winter months where many people are worried about the cost of living and extra expenses for courses are not considered essential.

Collaborations

Over the past year we have worked closely with several key groups within the town, namely Tidy Randalstown, Randal Community Shed, Town Team, Randalstown Autism Group, JAM Store and Randalstown Chamber of Trade. We keenly support all the work of these organisations.

We provide admin support to Tidy Randalstown, Randalstown Autism Group and Randal Community Shed – who utilize office services and skills of staff on a frequent basis.

Publicity /Information

ARCHES website continues to be maintained by Sinead who has spent a lot of time designing and implementing a streamlined online image for Randalstown ARCHES. We continue to use social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more recently – Next Door.

Our community newsletter -ARCHES Outlook- continues to be published quarterly, providing a great means of communicating with our community. We have just published our 100th issue and are indebted to Tidy Randalstown volunteers who pounded the pavements to get them delivered over the weekend.

Finance and Funding

Of course, everything we do at ARCHES would not be possible without the backing and support of our funders. Without them our work would be much weakened. Department for Communities provide part-funding for our core costs, including salaries. Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council also support some core premises costs along with support for Festival and the Christmas Lights and this year we received a Technical Assistance grant to help with conducting a feasibility study for an exciting new project we hope to start on next year.

Thank you to the local traders who are a great help and support to us all year round.

ARCHES has been fortunate to secure a large amount of funding over the years and we are proud of our reputation amongst funders as a reliable and progressive group that delivers results. In common with many other community groups throughout the province, ARCHES had the foresight to invest in property

which continues to provide us with an income in case the day may come where public funding sources were to cease.

Plans and Priorities for 2023

Most of the activities and many of the issues outlined above will, of course be high on the Boards list of priorities for 2023. We will shortly be starting our feasibility study for our next big project, preparations will also begin for our next strategy review and developing some succession planning for the Board. In addition, we have several projects in the pipeline in conjunction with Tidy Randalstown, Peace IV, and Heritage Lottery to improve shared community spaces and look forward to seeing them come to fruition soon.

Closing Comments

I'd like to finish by thanking our Board, and all our staff, for their efforts throughout the year. They are the ones who live our culture and deliver the outstanding service that our community value so highly.

Finally, it is always an honour to be the Chairman of ARCHES. In the face of adversity, everyone at ARCHES has rallied together and responded with determination, resilience, kindness, and compassion. The true measure of an organisation can often best be seen when it faces tough challenges, and the team at ARCHES has performed magnificently. I am humbled to represent our staff and our community, both past and present, who have helped make ARCHES the successful and respected organisation it is today. I am excited about our future and look forward to bigger and better things ahead.

5. AUDITORS' REPORT

Celine Corrigan outlined details of ARCHES finances. She expressed appreciation of the work done by Willie Allen and Hannah Moloney which greatly assisted with the compilation of the accounts. The accounts were agreed.

6. REAPPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

It was proposed and agreed that Corrigan & Co be reappointed as ARCHES' auditors

Proposed Brian McGookin

Seconded Moore Blair

7. RETIREMENT AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

The regulations in ARCHES' Articles governing the election of directors were read out. A secret ballot was carried out and the 6 retiring directors – Helen Boyd, Peter Boyle, Christine Butler, Martin Hackett, Liam Hurrell and Joe McErlean – were declared re-elected to the Board for the coming year.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None