



IDS AGM Meeting Minutes

Venue: Zoom/Facebook Live Stream

28 November 2020, 14:00 – 16:00

Board members present	Lianne Quigley (LQ)(Chairperson), John Bosco Conama (JBC)(Vice Chairperson), Mary Stringer (MS)(Director), Aidan McCardle (AM) (Director), Sofiya Kalinova (SK) (Director), Lydia Mendes (LM) (Director), Carol Browne (CB) (Director)
Members present	87 members attended online
In Attendance	John Sherwin (JS) (CEO), David Muldowney (DM) (Company Secretary, Minute Taker), Brendan Kirwan (BK) (Note-taker), Tracy Daly (TD) (Interpreter), Amanda Mohan (AM) (Interpreter)
Quorum	Yes

Minutes

1	Opening of Meeting
	<p>Chairperson, Lianne Quigley (LQ) opens the meeting and welcomes everyone.</p> <p>There being a quorum present, the meeting proceeds to business. Chair asks for patience from all attendees during this first online only format AGM. Technical hitches will be addressed as best as possible as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Chair states that the IDS Mission Statement will be updated next year and with regard to the Constitution we want to achieve full access to citizenship of society by empowering the community, celebrating our culture and achieving recognition for the Deaf Community.</p>
2	Adoption of the agenda
	Approved by majority vote.
3	Minutes of the 37th Annual General Meeting 17th August 2019
	<p>No amendments requested by members.</p> <p>Proposal to adopt the 2019 AGM meeting minutes. Proposed by Brain Crean, seconded by Graham O Shea. Vote: 91% accepted, 9% rejected.</p>
4	Matters arising from AGM 2019 minutes
	Kevin Lynch requests clarification of this AGM meeting number and year this AGM relates to.
5	Chairperson's Address
	Chair LQ gives address to the meeting as follows:

Dear Members,

We are coming to the end of 2020, this year has forced us all into new ways of working, new ways of thinking, and problem-solving. The global Covid-19 pandemic has been a huge challenge for the Deaf community and society in general.

Over the last year since the pandemic started to take effect in Ireland, IDS has worked hard to continue services remotely and to provide ISL information for our community. We also campaigned hard with other organisations to see ISL interpreters on TV and social media for emergency announcements and the Department of Health briefings. Although much progress has been made there are still many accessibility gaps that need to be addressed. Marginalised groups like the Deaf community are often hit hardest during difficult times and IDS are committed to working with you and for you always.

I would like to give thanks to our staff, our volunteers, and our community who have worked together and I ask you all to continue to find ways to co-operate so that we can look after the most vulnerable in our community and see real change in the way the State delivers its services and information to all Deaf people.

I would like to welcome our new members who have joined for the first time this year. I would also like to welcome back our past members who have re-joined to continue their support for IDS. This support is more important now than ever.

Last year, 2019 was a difficult year for the Irish Deaf Society as an organisation. I am happy to say that although the year started badly, it finished well.

In January 2019, we had an open meeting of IDS members January to discuss the funding crisis we faced. At that time IDS only had enough funding to keep our doors open until the end of March.

The purpose of the meeting was to explain what the funding crisis was, how it has happened, and what needs to happen next. The meeting was a success and the Deaf community is behind the IDS.

It was clear that change was needed in IDS. We explored many different options including if we could move our education and advocacy services to another organisation if we had to close. That is how serious the situation was.

In the end, with the full co-operation and support from staff, IDS found a way to restructure our services, reduce our expenses, and increase our funding. We found a way to stabilise our financial situation, although our audited accounts at the end of 2019 show a small loss this was a huge improvement from the previous years.

In May 2019, we have seen Deaf candidates Micheal Kelliher and Graham O' Shea come forward to stand in the local elections (Dublin and Cork). In early 2020, our IDS board director Dr. John Bosco Conama was standing for the Seanad election. This is a clear sign that our community wants to participate in political life. These moments were part of history for our Deaf community in Ireland.

In late 2019, IDS joined the DPO (Disabled Persons Organisation) coalition - DPO Coalition is committed to the human and social rights model of disability. Membership of the DPO Coalition is open to all current rights-based national DPOs in Ireland. The purpose of this coalition is the preparation for the submission of a DPO coalition shadow report to the Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) as part of its examination of Ireland's implementation of the Convention.

I would like to congratulate our own IDS board member Sofiya Kalinova, she has been admitted into the Barrister at Law degree course at the Honorable Society of King's Inns and she is the first Deaf person to be admitted to this course. I wish all the best for her studies.

Another milestone for Deaf Community, I would like to congratulate Patricia Heffernan who made Irish history as the first Deaf person who sat on a jury and deliberated on a verdict. In 2017, Richard Dudley was the first Deaf person who sat on the jury but the trial was stopped shortly after it began.

In 2019 we have started on a journey of reform and improvement that continues today, we expanded our board membership with new Directors and I would like to thank them for their voluntary service, guidance, and dedication.

I would like to welcome Co-opt directors Sofiya Kalinova (September 2019) and Carol Browne (she was an observer first for 3 months in February 2020). I also would like to welcome IDS observer member Lydia Mendes since June 2020. I would like to wish them all the best for the upcoming AGM to be elected.

You may know that IDS has been working on a new constitution this year. We have had a draft approved by the Charities Regulator and it is ready to present to members for approval. We will be communicating with members in ISL to make sure you understand all parts of it. The new constitution will be approved by EGM early next year.

The new draft strengthens our commitment to being a Deaf led organisation but at the same time allows a maximum of 2 hearing people joins the board. This gives us an opportunity to add more Directors to the board from the wider community bringing different experiences and perspectives.

I would like to welcome David Muldowney as IDS company secretary. This IDS company secretary has no voting rights.

Unfortunately, Olive Rafferty and Mary Regan step down from the IDS board during late 2019 and 2020. I would like to acknowledge their contributions and thank them for their time and services being on the IDS. I wish all the best to them for the future.

I am delighted to announce that IDS CEO John Sherwin has accepted our permanent contract as the CEO. We are looking forward to continuing to work with him.

We are working towards a more effective, transparent, and well-governed IDS that can be more effective and provide more results for you, our community.

Thank you to all board, Staff, Volunteers, IDS members, and members of the Deaf community for your hard work in keeping IDS strong and steady.

Thank you all.

Lianne Quigley

Irish Deaf Society Chairperson

6 2019 Review of the Affairs of the Company

As review of IDS affairs for the previous financial year was delivered by CEO John Sherwin to the meeting as follows:

Dear Members

My journey with IDS as interim CEO started in December of 2018 as the organisation faced a financial crisis. The organisation had significant losses in 2016 and 2017 and a Government bailout in 2018 saved IDS from similar losses and closure.

In 2019 the Government was able to support us again with emergency funding, but it was clear they could not provide the same amount as they had in the year before. Significant changes in the organisation were needed, we had to reduce our expenses and increase our income to survive.

Over the course of the year our staff, board, volunteers and members pulled together to find ways to re-structure IDS and to keep delivering our services.

These changes started with a review of how our services worked and conducting a collective redundancy process for roles that did not have funding. During this process we reduced the number of staff working for IDS and also found ways to make our operations more efficient.

During 2019 we merged the Deaf Adult Literacy Services (DALs) and the Irish Sign Language Academy (ISLA) into a single "Further Education and Training Department." This resulted in a more streamlined workflow for staff and also a clearer focus on the changes we want to see in the future. I want to give thanks to the FET Department management, staff, teachers and tutors for working very hard and embracing a lot of change in roles. The Department's future is bright as a result.

As part of our re-engagement with QQI, who license us to issue educational certificates, we are developing an Academic Council. This council will have members who are teachers, tutors, students and experts in Deaf and mainstream education and training. This council will work with the FET Department to steer the direction of our education services in the coming years.

In 2019 our Advocacy Department as under serious pressure to reduce costs to survive. As a result, we moved our team from the office in the DVI atrium into Thomas Mahon Building saving costs on rent. At the same time staff hours were reduced and of course this had an impact on the service, but all these measures allowed us to keep the service open. This year, if we did not have our fantastic Advocacy team, we would not have been able to provide so much ISL information and resources about Covid-19.

Although the team is small and our services are limited, we understand how important it is for the Deaf community and we have big plans and ambitions for the coming years to expand.

Another key change in terms of our fundraising operation was closing our charity shops warehouse operation, this created a huge annual saving but increased pressure on the shops to manage donations in the shop premises. I would like to thank CIDP for their support in making this transition. CIDP gave IDS storage space for donations in their premises while we figured out how to close the warehouse with the least disruption possible.

I am happy to tell you that the shops in Drogheda and Ashbourne were able to manage this change and in fact were able to increase the income in the shops at the same time.

In 2019 our charity shop in Phibsborough closed, which means we have two shops remaining, Ashbourne and Drogheda. We plan to open more shops in the coming years and I would like to thank the shop staff and especially their workers and volunteers, we could not run the shops without their support and dedication.

During 2019 we made some significant IT changes. The accounts Department worked hard to implement a new online accounting package which makes reporting and budgeting more transparent and effective.

I would like to thank SupportIT, our technical support company, who provided free services to help us move all of our files, emails and task management online – into the cloud on the Microsoft Sharepoint system. This means that staff can access files from any location and our files are safe and backed up in the case of any disaster. Of course, this helped us to continue to operate from home when the fire in DVI knocked out services to Thomas Mahon Building in 2019.

Little did we know that this experience would be so important to us in 2020. It really gave us a head start in terms of our ability to continue our services while working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2019 was a real challenge for IDS. 2020 has been a very different type of challenge but we continue not only to survive but to get stronger. We are focussed on how to develop our services and we are looking to the future.

Our staff are dedicated to our members and the Deaf community.

John Sherwin

CEO Irish Deaf Society

Questions from members to the CEO arising from this report:

Donal Desmond requests an update on National Council, the meeting that was held in 2019 with the National Council and the IDS and the outcomes from that meeting. LQ states that a meeting in 2019 did not happen but there was a meeting in Summer 2020 on the governance code solely and agrees that it is time to arrange a meeting with National Council members for as soon as possible. There was some collaboration with NC for the 2019 raffle. JS adds that we are always looking for new staff for the Advocacy office to solely focus on the NC members and we are seeking a grant to enable this to happen.

Philip Grehan: requests additional clarification around DALs and the academy. JS: explains the differences in duties between the two roles and the responsibilities covered by each.

Helena Saunders: notes that the ISL academy and council were not been approved by members at an AGM and so came about in an inappropriate way. Who is involved in the selection committee? JS: we did make some decisions regarding the setup of the ISL council and the steering committee. QQI needed responses to their queries and so they influenced us in the establishment of this group. Membership is still in the decision process and we intend communicating with our members around this. LQ: also the EGM will give the opportunity specifically directed towards the constitution and related matters.

	<p>Helena Saunders: requests there is a discussion regarding the “Bullying” segment of the constitution prior to the EGM. LQ and JS acknowledge this request.</p>
7	<p>Statutory Financial Statements / Report of the Directors / Auditors’ Report</p>
	<p>Cathal Cusack of Cusack Garvey delivered his auditor’s report overview to the meeting as follows:</p> <p><i>“I carried out an Audit during COVID-19. IDS directors are responsible for producing accounts and we audit those accounts. We found that the accounts presented were true and fair. No additional information was required, it is a clean audited report. IDS is solvent and is a going concern. There are some uncertainties because of the COVID-19 influence on the shops but in general this is still a positive report.”</i></p> <p>CEO JS delivers an addition verbal financial report to the members with highlights as follows: two government bailouts were required to keep IDS solvent during 2018 and 2019. 2020 finances currently seem more stable and a small budget surplus by end of 2020 is expected.</p> <p>JS reports that there is an open conversation between IDS and the government funding bodies regarding Advocacy Service incomes and requests members to contact him directly for detailed updates if required.</p> <p>Questions to the CEO from the members arising from these reports:</p> <p>Donal Desmond: on requesting a rebate from WFD/EUD for membership fees during the Covid19 2020 year. JS: the feeling was that the support would be useful to the WFD/EUD and the IDS could afford to leave the support in place, so no rebate on this fee sought.</p> <p>Proposal to adopt the 2019 financial reports: Proposed by Donal Desmond, seconded by Eddie Redmond. 97% in favour, 3% against.</p>
8	<p>Election of Directors</p>
	<p>Three new directors to be appointed in this meeting:</p> <p>Motion to appoint Sofiya Kalinova to the IDS Board of Directors Proposed by Lianne Quigley, seconded by John Bosco Conoma. Vote: 97% in favour, 3% against</p> <p>Motion to appoint Lydia Mendes to the IDS Board of Directors Proposed by Lianne Quigley, seconded by John Bosco Conoma. Vote: 97% in favour, 3% against</p> <p>Motion to appoint Carol Browne to the IDS Board of Directors Proposed by Lianne Quigley, seconded by John Bosco Conoma Vote: 90% in favour, 10% against</p>
9	<p>Approval of the remuneration of the Statutory Auditor</p>

	Motion to re-appoint Cusack Garvey as IDS auditor Proposed by Donal Desmond, seconded by C Grehan Vote: 100% in favour, 0% against
10	Approval of the remuneration of the Statutory Auditor
	Motion to approve the remuneration of the auditor Proposed by Ronan Lowry, seconded by Eddie Redmond Vote: 97% in favour, 3% against
11	Motions / Resolutions
	No proposals for additional motions received prior to this AGM
12	AOB
	<p>From the floor of the meeting:</p> <p>Ronan McDonagh: regarding access to some TV programming becoming available. LQ notes this and will pass on this comment to the Access for TV committee.</p> <p>Stephen Bates: regarding access to some Virgin Media programming. LQ notes and will pass on request to Brian Crean. Brian Crean comments that in general Virgin Media and other platforms are poor in this regard and is hopeful that quality will improve because of concerns raised with the BAI.</p> <p>Helena Saunders: comments that people involved in Community Employment schemes cannot be board members and that some IDS staff can vote at meetings. Requests that this potential conflict of interest be addressed in the upcoming constitution discussions. LQ thanks for the comment</p> <p>Brid Garrihy: offers some ideas regarding fundraising initiatives. LQ requests the ideas be emailed to the fundraising@irishdeafsociety.ie for recording.</p> <p>Kevin Lynch states that he would like to see the back catalogue of Deaf Journal publications that was printed monthly over the past 30 years being submitted to the Deaf Heritage Society and would love to see the journal being re-introduced. LQ thanks Kevin for comment.</p>
13	Meeting concludes

Signed:  Date: 19/05/2021

Chairperson