

Spiritan Education Trust

Minutes of the 194th Board of Directors Meeting, 18th January 2021

This meeting was held via teleconference

Directors Attending

Mr. Gary Abrahamian
Mr. Brendan Dillon
Mr. Rory Guinan
Mr. Pat Kitterick, Chair
Ms. Caroline Lundy

Ms. Emer O'Connor
Dr. Tom Whelan CSSp
Mr. Ronan White
Sr. Eithne Woulfe

In Attendance

Mr. Ronan Barry, Faith & Mission Officer
Mr. Tom Jackson, Company Secretary, Finance Officer
Ms. Sheila Lanney, Administration Officer (Recording Secretary)
Mr. Tom Sheridan, Executive Officer

1. Prayer

Ronan Barry read the reflection on Hope as we start a new year. The Chair asked that James Docherty's father and recently deceased Spiritan Confreres be remembered in our prayers and offered condolences. He also offered Gary the Board's condolences on the death of his grandmother.

2. Preliminaries

The Chair thanked the Board for deferring the meeting and wished everyone a happy New Year.

- (a) Apologies received – None.
- (b) Conflicts of Interest to be declared – none.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- (a) The Minutes of the 193rd Ordinary Meeting of 30th November 2020 were agreed for signing in due course.
- (b) Matter arising (not included in this Agenda): None

4. Reports

(a) Finance

SET audit

Tom J. advised that, due to Covid restrictions, the SET Audit is being done remotely and is nearly complete. At the February BoD meeting the Auditors will make a short presentation.

Rockwell College

In a letter dated the 18th of December the Secretary of the BoM confirmed that, at SET's request, the proposed on-campus girls boarding would not now proceed for

2021-22. It may be necessary to confirm to the BoM that this postponement is indefinite.

The urgent need for submission of the school's 2021 budget was emphasised in communications with the Rockwell Financial Controller and an indicative date of 2 April has been noted. SET will assist the BOM in any way it can in achieving a balanced budget. A BoM request to spend 15,000 on a basketball court upgrade was approved on the basis that facilities have to be maintained and a once-off cost of €15K is not material in the overall context of Rockwell expenditure.

The BoD noted recent changes to BoM membership. Mr Cyril Kavanagh has been appointed to the BoM Finance Sub-committee. This is seen as strengthening the authority of the BoM in the serious task of getting the school finances back on track, given the current and projected deficit in certain circumstances, such as decisions on the holding of Camp Rockwell in 2021.

Finance sub-committee

The sub-committee must resume work in light of upcoming financial oversight events that require attention prior to being brought to the BoD. Co-option – with BoD approval - was recommended as a means of expanding membership with relevant background and skills. BoD suggestions will be welcomed.

Members noted a strong overlap between financial oversight and best practice generally in matters of governance, particularly in the context of our obligations to report compliance for the first time in 2021 under the revised Charities Governance Code. Such a report can be a central part of the SET Annual Report.

Other matters

It was noted that Tom J is preparing a memo on the issue of direct Congregational links with schools on fund-raising projects as a prelude to providing appropriate advice to those schools.

(b) Governance

The Chair briefed the BoD on advices received from Susan O'Connell of O'Connell Brennan Solrs on the draft Memo of Understanding between Members and Directors of SET. Governance Sub-Committee is continuing to review the advices and, in revisiting the text of the draft MoU, will take the opportunity to reflect on views of Directors expressed at this meeting. Views were expressed, *inter alia*, on:

- the need to emphasise the respective rights and responsibilities of the parties to the MoU as set down in the Constitution in addition to agreement on best procedural practice in the expression of those rights in certain circumstances
- the requirement to have clear and explicit procedure where there was conflict between the parties was deemed essential to the MoU
- lines of demarcation in relation to involvement of Members in matters such as governance of schools.

5. Executive Report – specific matters for updating & discussion

(a) Education Mission Project

The Executive provided a brief background report on the genesis of the Spiritan education mission project on special education provision. A letter to school authorities provided context for engagement and dialogue on expansion of ‘the vision of inclusivity within the educational mission and in line with the Spiritan charism’; an early meeting with Chairs and Principals is planned.

The broad aims and objectives of the project were fully endorsed by the Board and participation by SET (Executive and BoD) on a joint Steering Group with the PLT/Members and the P&FO was approved. Terms of Reference for the Steering Group were in preparation and will be circulated to the BoD in due course. Membership is as follows:

Chair	Sean Goan, Coordinator of Spiritan Mission Ireland
Provincialate	Peter Conaty C.S.Sp. & David Conway C.S.Sp.
P&F Office	Garry Lyons & Darren Lancaster
SET	Tom Sheridan, Tom Jackson & Pat Kitterick (<i>pro tem.</i>)
Administrative support	Sheila Lanney, SET

The BoD was reassured of the strong commitment of the Congregation to this project and saw great merit in the establishment of the joint steering group. A report on the work of the steering group will be included as a standing item in the Executive Report to the Board. The work of the Executive to date on the project was acknowledged. Pilot of confirmation. RB – just a conversation starter, hand holding process, adult confirmation in schools.

(b) Rockwell College.

See Finance above.

(c) Other matters

The BoD noted, in particular, the Ethos sub-committee proposal to initiate conversation on sacramental preparation for Confirmation in Spiritan schools. Fuller discussion of the proposal by the BoD will be facilitated in due course.

6. **Any Other Business** as may properly arise: None.

7. Next Meeting

The next BOD meeting is scheduled for Monday 22nd February 2021. Auditors RBK will attend to present the outcomes of the recent school audits.

Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

Secretary: _____ Date: _____