

Minutes of Irish Planning Institute AGM Meeting

Date:	12 th December 2024
Time:	14:00 - 15:52
Venue:	Grand Canal Hotel, Dublin 4, and online via Zoom
Present:	(12 no. in person, 17 no. online)
Apologies recorded:	John Martin, Henk van der Kamp
In Attendance:	Seán O'Leary and Shelly Boylan

1 Introduction and President's Address

The President, Gavin Lawlor, opened the meeting and welcomed those present both in-person and online. He acknowledged the hard work of the Council and of the Institute's staff: Seán O'Leary (Senior Planner) and Shelly Boylan (Administration Manager). He noted the very full programme of events over the year, including two very successful Conferences in Waterford and Dublin, and a wide range of online and in-person CPD sessions. He stated that the Institute had raised key issues through the media and directly with elected representatives, including Ministers both North and South. The Institute had offered constructive solutions and feedback on matters ranging from planning legislation, resourcing of the planning service, and climate change. In conclusion, he remembered those members that had passed away during 2024, including Jeanne Meldon and Alan Whelan.

2. Adoption of Minutes of 2023 AGM

The minutes of the 2023 AGM, held on December 7th 2023, which had been circulated with the papers for the present meeting, were adopted on the proposition of Ciarán Tracey, seconded by Brendan Allen, without amendment.

3.....Matters arising from the Minutes of 2024 AGM

There were no Matters arising from the Minutes raised by those present.

4....Annual Report of the Council and its activities and Discussion

The Annual Report, which had been circulated with the AGM papers, was noted. The Hon. Secretary, Philip Jones, gave a brief outline of the work of the Council in 2024, noting the membership of the Council, which had met on 13 occasions during the year. He stated that the Institute had elected 143 new members during the year, but that 40 existing members had been struck off for non-payment of subscriptions. During the year, Honorary Membership had been unanimously conferred on Fergal MacCabe.

The Annual Report, listing the key events, and the work of the Institute's Committees, was taken as read. There were no questions arising.

5. Honorary Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts

The Hon. Treasurer, Juliet Ryan, spoke to her report, which had been circulated in advance as part of the Annual Report. She noted that the Institute had, at the end of its accounting year on September 30th 2024, reserves of €90,822, which represented a significant increase on the corresponding figure in 2023 of €58,000, and a reversal of the trend of declining reserves since 2020. The surplus, of income over expenditure, of €33,172, represented the first surplus since 2020, and was a most welcome improvement on the deficits of €21,000 in 2023 and of €230,000 in 2022.

Juliet noted that, if the Institute was to secure 70% to 80% of its funding from membership (which was desirable), then it would need to increase its membership, and that the new Constitution, and new Bye-Laws, would be the key to this. She noted that efforts to arrange for payment of membership subscriptions directly by employers were progressed during the year.

The Hon. Treasurer stated that she was not proposing an increase in membership subscription fees for 2025, but that it was expected that fee increases would be necessary for 2026, in order to keep pace with operating costs and inflation, and to continue to provide a quality service to our members.

The Annual Accounts and Auditor's report, which had been circulated in advance with the AGM papers, were received, and accepted by the meeting, on the proposition of Brendan Allen, seconded by Stephen O'Sullivan. There were no questions arising.

Appointment of Auditors

The Hon. Treasurer proposed the appointment of UHY Farrelly Dawe White Ltd., as auditors for the period 2024 – 2025. This was seconded by Brendan Allen and agreed by the meeting.

5. Special Resolution

The following Special Resolution was proposed by Philip Jones and seconded by Gavin Lawlor:-

“That the Annual General Meeting resolves to adopt a new Constitution (Memorandum and Articles of Association) of the Institute, to replace the existing Constitution, and further resolves that this Constitution will come into force following the 2025 Annual General Meeting, or on the 31st day of December 2025, which date is earlier”.

Philip outlined the basis for this resolution, noting that the full text of the proposed new Constitution had been circulated in advance, with the papers for the meeting. He stated that the new Constitution, which had been prepared following advice from Senan Turnbull (who had outlined the need for this immediately following the 2023 AGM), and had previously been circulated for comments, had been examined in detail by the Institute Council, and was

recommended by the Council for adoption by the members. He stated that reason for its coming into force a year after the current AGM was to allow the Council to prepare a number of accompanying Bye-Laws during 2025, which would flesh out aspects that had been included in the old (existing) Constitution, but were not present in the proposed new Constitution. The Bye-Laws would also streamline many of the existing procedures, in order to align these with the requirements of the new Constitution.

Philip answered a number of queries raised by members.

The Special Resolution, which was formally seconded by Gavin, was put to the vote, and was passed, by twenty-five votes in favour, with none against and four abstentions.

5 Any Other Business

Patrick Collins, noting the reference in the 2023 AGM minutes to the RTPI, asked the Council to continue the work with the RTPI, and in particular to review the issue of reduced subscriptions for people who were members of both Institutes. Gavin Lawlor responded that the Council was currently in discussions with the RTPI, noting that a new RTPI President would be in office in 2025. He said that he hoped to meet with him/her during the coming year to discuss the issue of reciprocal recognition of members, and that Mr Collins' point would be raised in that context.

Tim Walsh asked about the proposed Membership Bye-Laws. Philip Jones clarified that draft Membership Bye-Laws would be circulated to Institute members for their observations, and that these observations would be considered by the Council before final adoption. Once adopted, these Bye-Laws, and other Bye-Laws, would be brought before an EGM during 2025 for approval.

Brendan Allen noted the increase in membership numbers of 103 over those in 2023, and suggested that this increase was the result of people attracted by the extensive CPD programme undertaken during the year, and new graduates. He was of the view that the key issue was getting membership subscriptions paid by employers. Gavin Lawlor replied that the Institute was in discussions with the CCMA about this matter.

A member, online, queried about efforts by the Institute to reach out to Northern Ireland planners. Seán O'Leary responded that a Northern Branch had been established, and the Institute had met the Northern Ireland Minister for Infrastructure. The Institute was seeking out members working in the North, and would be providing NI-focused CPD in 2025.

Stephen O'Sullivan asked that Northern Ireland planners be taken into account in the Membership Bye-Laws. Gavin Lawlor responded that this would indeed be done, in the Membership Bye-Laws and also in revised Education Guidelines, both of which would be adopted by Council in 2025.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 15:52.