



St Aidan's College Alumni Association

Minutes from the AGM

held on Saturday 10th November 2018

Time: 2pm

The Shincliffe Room, St Aidan's College

Present

Emma Fisher (EF – Secretary), Ben Fisher (BF – Reunions Officer), Alex Tarrant-Anderson (ATA – Archives Officer), Chris Smith (CS – Careers Development Officer), Paul Cohen (PC – Digital Communications Officer), Clara Ohayon (CO – JCR President) and Susan Frenk (SF – Principal).

1. Introduction and welcome

Emma Fisher (EF) welcomed everyone present and explained the tradition behind starting the AGM by electing its chair.

2. Election of Chair for AGM

Ben Fisher (BF) nominated Clara Ohayon (CO), seconded by Alex Tarrant-Anderson (ATA). It was agreed on a general aye.

3. Apologies for absence

Josh Stocco (Archive Officer), Kenneth Sandman (Web Manager), Matt Spencer (Treasurer) and Ed Smith (Reunion Officer).

4. Minutes of the 2017 AGM

Agreed as an accurate record by those who had been present.

The responses to the actions throughout were as follows:

Action – EF to chase up who paid for the Basil Spence sketch frames. The JCR paid for it originally but the Alumni Association paid them back. Action completed.

Action – Stefan Klidzia (SK – Vice-Principal) to chase where the narrative about the Alumni Association is going with EW. EF followed this up herself and SF had ensured that the wording went online for this year's first years. However, CO explained that the current first year had found it difficult to locate the wording on the new system and, as a consequence, very few first years had opted in to pay the fee. SF explained that the window for students to pay online was originally expected by colleges to run for longer, but in the event there was only a small window of opportunity for students to pay so, once many of them were aware of it, it was too late. BF asked if there were other ways to get info to the first years e.g. info sent out by post and SF suggested we should produce a flyer about the Alumni Association that could be included in next year's mail out to freshers. College is also considering asking Event Durham to set up a page for online payments which could run over a longer period, going live earlier. Mary's and Collingwood piloted that this year when they discovered the timeline for the online payments, so SF will consult them about outcome.

Action – SK to explore why the Association haven't been charged for the travel awards. EF explored this with Emma Wilson and we are now back on track to continue to make payments going forward. SF reported that College will not seek reimbursement for the Alumni travel awards paid out of College fundraising as this had been a finance error when the finance assistant was on a protracted period of leave.

Action – BF to contact College (Lesley Peak) regarding the gala dinner money. BF had got the ball rolling with this but after several chasers had not got a response. SF asked BF to forward the e-mail trail and she would look into it for us. SF believes that this is a matter for Finance rather than Ops.

Action – EF to put out an ad to get a newsletter committee together for the new year aiming for a newsletter to go out in late spring. This would involve breaking the newsletter production into several smaller roles. All of this has been done but it all took longer to establish than planned so the newsletter is not due out until January 2019.

Action - BF & ES to look to put on some kind of alumni event in London in the Spring. This didn't take place when planned but committee members researched potential venues for this last month and BF will look to organize something for next spring.

Action – EF and BF to ask Deborah Wood at DARO if she could help us again with other informal requests to put current students in touch with Alumni. CS had carried this out instead but was told that there was not enough resource for this.

Action – If the above action is possible, CS and LH to work together to publicise it with the JCR and CS and KS to work together to publicise it on the website. N/A

Action – Committee to decide on other ways to offer support to the JCR – e.g. Career mentoring outside of After Aidan's, CV/Careers surgery around recruitment fair etc. A discussion took place about how the morning's careers fair had potential but there were only a handful of alumni in attendance and very little student interest. CO said we should try it again next year but entice 2nd and 3rd years back into College for it with a free brunch. She also suggested having the stalls at the champagne reception and making the dinner one for current

students as well as recent graduates so that the evening would bring the two groups together to talk about life after Aidan's more generally as well as careers more specifically. PC suggested it could be a fancy dress formal and people could dress as their career! SF suggested that, with undergraduates going, we could have a differential pricing system. Dinner could be a college event for students' career development, with spaces available to a number of alumni at the higher price and alumni seated at tables with current students. All discussed and agreed the importance of After Aidan's as the primary mechanism for engaging students/alumni. The blockers to this aren't well understood, so CS took an action to consolidate all questions and concerns before taking them forward.

Action – CS to speak to the careers service about what they are able to offer graduates and if they might be able to help us with our informal careers plans. This hasn't happened but SF offered to put CS in touch with someone at the careers service.

Action – EF to advertise for alumni volunteers to help with work of the Association. EF reported that this had been done several times over the year with mixed results – we had a few people come forward for the newsletter and the careers fair but no-one for the archive display case or anything else. SF said that she would do some investigative work with DARO about the reliability of the database and how to effectively target people. Alumni present voiced some inconsistencies regarding what they did and didn't receive by e-mail so EF will investigate the disparity with DARO.

Action - CS to get in touch with DARO to see if fundraising is an easy thing to do via the website. CS had done this and Deborah Wood had said that it was and that several colleges have done this. SF and EF reported that the donations page has recently appeared back on the alumni page.

Action – EF to amend 12 months to six months and then publicise the new constitution to alumni. This was done straight after the last AGM.

New actions coming from the discussions about last year's actions:

Action - Committee to produce a flyer about the Alumni Association to put into next year's freshers packs.

Action - BF to forward the e-mail trail about the gala dinner money to SF.

Action - SF to put CS in touch with someone at the careers service.

Action - CS to work with Kate Anderson & others to work out what the gaps are with After Aidan's currently. Committee to work out the best way of raising these with DARO

Action - CS to put together an initial proposition on what sort of careers event SAAA could run instead of the careers fair that morning

Action - SF to do some investigative work with DARO about the reliability of the database and how to effectively target people.

Action – EF to investigate the disparity between e-mails sent to alumni with DARO.

Committee members reports:

a. Treasurer

CO read a report sent to EF by Matt Spencer (MS).

"With the large contribution made to the display cabinet, the association has less money than it did at this time 2 years ago - £20k as opposed to £29k. Whilst I would encourage spending on smaller travel awards etc I think we should hold off on any "capital" projects for a year or so.

As in my report last year, two lots of subscription were received in 2016/17 so there was no subscription in the accounts last year. These accounts have always been prepared on a cash basis so there are timing issues such as this. I have started moving the accounts to accruals to reflect income and expenditure in the period it relates to.

No newsletter costs for this period.

The total cost of the display cabinet was £12.5k. I haven't seen it myself so someone who has will have to let me know if they feel this is adequately reflected and we got our money's worth!

The reunion took place in July 2017 and had a net expense to the committee of £350.

We should start giving out travel awards again - these haven't been done for ages

College have not paid us the £925 from the Gala Dinner (£5 per head). However we also owe them £159 for one guest's expenses so they currently owe us a net amount of £766.

I would like to stand down from my position, but am happy to carry on in a caretaker capacity for the time being. Work and family commitments mean that I can no longer give the role the full attention it deserves and while nothing major has "fallen through the cracks" yet, I am worried that this could happen without something keeping a closer eye on things. I have not yet heard from Charlie Hamilton if she wants to continue as assistant or take up my role."

SF reported that a recent breakage of some glass in the display cabinet was expensive to repair and that College had paid because the cover did not include accidental breakage to any of the glass. The cover is for one year only. If the association was to make further expensive purchases, we should get some professional advice on which companies to use and also a legal expert to check the terms and conditions.

b. Newsletter

EF explained that we currently had no newsletter officer on the committee but that a band of three volunteers had been formed who had put a newsletter together over the summer which was currently in production and was due out in Jan 2019. EF had asked them if they wanted to be on the committee but they didn't want to so she didn't push it as she was just grateful that they had put the newsletter together and was hoping that they would continue! CS suggested approaching past JCR secretaries to see if they would be interested.

Action – CO to provide EF with names of last 5 JCR secretaries so that EF can ask them if they'd like to become a newsletter officer.

c. Archive

ATA said that he was happy to stand for another year. He then read a report sent to EF by Joshua Stocco (JS).

“The archive team recently installed the display case that was commissioned for the entrance to the College, to increase the visibility of some of the items stored in the archive, and to educate visitors to the college on the colourful history of St. Aidan’s. We have framed and hung reprints of Sir Basil Spence’s original concept drawings for the college in the main hallway. We also put on a large display of photos and documents that were available for viewing throughout the 70th anniversary reunion, thanks to everyone that attended and to everyone that donated items for the display; the reunion gave us a rare opportunity to record and document some fascinating memories from Alumnae that were present in the early days of the college, thank you to everyone that sat down with us and contributed to the project throughout the weekend. We are currently searching for volunteers to help manage the new display case. We are looking for Alumni that still live near to St. Aidan’s to create a team of local volunteers that will be partly responsible for using our materials archived in the Palace Green Library to create interesting displays to inform and inspire everyone that passes through the entrance to the college. We are, of course, always grateful for donations of memorabilia for our archive; we would love to see anything that might help build up a picture of the eclectic history of St. Aidan’s College. Materials of interest include:

- Diaries, letters and scrapbooks
- Records and memorabilia from student organisations and clubs
- Flyers, posters, invitations and other memorabilia from events and social activities
- Photographs and audio and video recordings of the college and student or alumni events
- Copies of student publications.

If you have something that might be of interest we are happy to have a facsimile if you wish to keep the original, this is something you can either do yourselves or we will gladly do it for you. You can get in touch with us at archive@aidans-alumni.org.uk”.

d. Reunions

BF referred to his earlier mention of his plans to run an informal London event in Spring.

e. Web Manager

KS has stepped down and BF had been doing a fair amount of website updating. However, College are now the sole administrators of the website so any additions to the alumni webpage have to be done through Emma Wilson.

f. Digital Communication Officer

Ethan Tamlyn stepped down at the beginning of the year and BF has been keeping on top of it as much as possible.

g. Careers Development Officer

CS reported that his work on ensuring that donations could be made online was a success. He reported that this morning’s careers event was a good start and we have ideas for how to

develop it further. The third point under his jurisdiction is ‘After Aidan’s’ and we have had some progress on this, but it has stalled again. We need to find ways to push this forward, so he’ll keep in the loop with Kate Anderson. BF said that we need to keep putting the pressure on DARO and talk to the other alumni associations about the issues they’re having. SF said that we need a collective approach.

h. Secretary

EF said that there was very little to report as she had received a lot less e-mails compared to last year, after the amount received around the 2017 reunion. She said that she has also been representing Aidan’s Alumni Association on the group of College Alumni Associations that meets twice a year. BF mentioned that this was a good tool for practical advice and sharing good practice.

5. Election of officers (where necessary)

Treasurer – There was no-one present that was interested in the role but ATA said that he might do it next year once his exams were over and he was qualified. CO expressed an interest in picking up his archive role if that was to happen. SF suggested that it would be good to find out if Charlie (current assistant treasurer) would be willing to do it for a year as interim Treasurer.

Action - EF to find out if Charlie is willing to be treasurer for a year.

Newsletter – There was no-one present that was interested in the role.

Web Manager – There was no-one present that was interested in the role but it was acknowledged that the position is not needed at the moment as we can just send updates to Emma Wilson.

Digital Communication Officer – BF nominated Paul Cohen (PC) and CO seconded him. Taken on a general aye.

Action – BF to pass on the various logins etc for the Association’s social media accounts to PC

EF announced that Josh Stocco was standing down as archive officer but ATA confirmed that he would remain in post for another year, so there was no need to elect another archive officer.

EF announced that Ed Smith was standing down as reunions officer but BF confirmed that he would remain in post for another year, so there was no need to elect another reunions officer.

CS and EF both confirmed that they would stay in post for another year.

SF suggested that we should give a short speech at tonight’s dinner to promote the Alumni Association and put out a plea for more volunteers. BF said he would do this.

6. Review of Association aims set at 2017 AGM (see 2017 minutes)

The aims set at the 2017 AGM were read out:

1. Continue to build up the Association's archive of College memorabilia – BF asked if Luke Hollander had collected any memorabilia for this year and CO confirmed that he had. It was agreed that this aim should be ongoing.
2. Look to arrange an “informal” alumni event - perhaps away from Durham – BF said that he would be doing this in March but that the aim should be ongoing.
3. Update the Association’s website and develop its social media presence – BF said that the website is now established but maintaining it was ongoing. PC said that he would plug things online and use social media to send regular reminders.
4. Help College Officers to move forward the planned Alumni careers mentoring service for current students -“After Aidan’s”. It was agreed that this was ongoing.
5. Ensure the continuation of a high quality yearly newsletter. EF said that we were doing as much as we can with that but that it should remain as an aim.

7. Any other business

BF said that we’re worried about the funding of the Association now that so many students aren’t opting in to pay. He pointed out that the Association’s main annual expense is the cost of producing a newsletter which is c£5,000 pa. Historically, membership fees have comfortably covered this. But with the expected plummet in the number of freshers signing up for membership (£c100 this term) this will become impossible to fund within a few years. He also suggested that, by giving students the option to join the Association, it creates one of two farcical situations:

1. Some alumni will get services provided by the Association for free, whilst others will have paid, or alternatively,
2. The Association would have to try and monitor who has joined and who hasn’t and then restrict access to their services to those that haven’t.

BF finished by suggesting that this could make the current alumni model unworkable in the future.

EF reported that SF had asked the Alumni Association to sponsor an internship but SF said that she wanted to look into the cost of it first.

EF asked SF if there was any news on the new College Advisory Boards. SF reported that college officers were looking at the guidelines and assessing how much flexibility there could be over membership. SF, Paula Dawson and Emma Wilson would be meeting to finalise that on November 15th and would set a date for the first meeting. The CAB would meet once a term towards the end of term as College Council had.

CS asked where donations made from the alumni webpage go to and if we could get donations for the Alumni Association. SF said not at the moment, as donations need to be given to the College trust and the Alumni Association isn’t a charity – it is funded by fees. Donations are received by DARO and then forwarded to college. CS suggested this raised a broader point about the viability of an independent alumni association.

BF asked for it to be minuted that Josh Stocco and Matt Spencer had been excellent committee members and deserved many thanks.

SF thanked the whole committee for all their work.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm