

AGM 2022

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to all of you, both those here in person and those tuning in via Zoom for the Society's first "in-person" AGM since 2019.

My name is **Sean Treanor** from the *Department of Social Protection* and it my honour to present my first report as Chairperson of the Committee of Management.

I would firstly like to thank my predecessor as Chairperson, **Sarah Kate Keogh**, for her valuable contribution to the Society for the last 3 years.

There have also been significant changes on the personnel front. Somewhat like the "2 Popes", we have the outgoing and incoming Executive Directors present here today.

Karen Martin took over the position of Executive Director on secondment from the Revenue Commissioners on 5th April succeeding **Declan O'Brien** who has served in the capacity for almost 20 years.

In the period since April 5th, Declan has been assisting Karen in the handover and will be heading out the door this coming Friday, 13th May.

So, I would like to take this opportunity to formally welcome Karen to the position of Executive Director.

Karen has outlined her vision for the Society at the Committee meeting that was held here immediately prior to the AGM and we on the Committee, will support her and the staff in whatever way we can.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Declan for his many years' service to the Society and to wish him a long, health and happy retirement.

Later on this year, our long standing Administrative Assistant and the "real boss" of the Society, **Carmel Doyle** will also be retiring.

When you consider our staff compliment is 3, you will appreciate that with 2 of them retiring, there will be a lot of readjusting over the coming months.

Thankfully, the Dept. of Communications, Climate Change etc. has approved the extension of **Barbara Dillon's** secondment for a further year till September 2023.

We are extremely grateful to the Department for approving Barbara's further stay as she will be the vital link between the previous and future staff set ups and her experience will be an invaluable resource.

Having said that, such an amount of change will present significant challenges.

With regard to the Committee of Management, after many years of sterling service, our vice-Chairman, **Tom Clarke** is standing down from the Committee. Tom did a lot of vital work behind the scenes in helping to secure seconded staff and also in helping retain them for the Society. His input

will be sorely missed and we wish him all the best in his retirement. (*he may be zooming in from France, if all has gone to plan?*)

So, to the facts and figures for the year 2021.

GRANT AID 2021

Later on our treasurer, **John Meagher**, will take you through the Accounts for 2021. So, I will only concentrate on some of the headline figures for 2021.

A total of **€800,000** (*approx*) was granted by way of grant or loan in 2021 in **700 cases**.

The amount of assistance increased by **16%** from 2020's total of **€670,000** (*approx.*), while the number of cases was up 11% (*629 cases*) from 2020.

Of the €800,000 total, just under €520,000 was by way of non-repayable grant up 24% on 2020.

€280,000 was by means of interest-free loans, increase of 12% over 2020.

While the amounts granted in 2021 somewhat short of €1 million-plus approved in recent years, it is a sign that we are moving in that direction.

I have little doubt with the seismic world events of the last few months resulting in soaring inflation increased fuel prices and general cost of living increases, that our services will be sought in more numbers by our members in the coming months.

MEMBERSHIP 2021

The membership contribution figure has held fairly steady in spite of the pandemic. The amount of €563,649 was just 3.5% down on 2020 (€58,279).

The number of new members joining actually rose by 17 with 145 joining the Society in 2021.

The reason that the membership amount is down is because more members retired from the Society and did not continue their contribution than the number that joined.

It is an issue for the future that Peoplepoint no longer give retiring staff to select the deductions they wish to continue on their retirement forms. So, if a retired member wishes to remain on, they have to contact the Society and complete a mandate for the PMG. It is unlikely that many civil servants will go to those lengths to continue their subscriptions.

PROMOTION OF THE SOCIETY

As we lived much of 2021 in various states of restriction, all our promotional presentations were done online.

This was one of the unexpected bonuses of the pandemic in that we had far higher attendance at our presentations than had been the case with "in-person" presentations.

We will be looking to expand on this facility further in the coming year and have received very positive indications from our two largest departments, Social Protection and the Revenue Commissioners in that regard.

WORK PRACTICES

Since that last “in-person” AGM in 2019, there have been significant changes in how we go about our business in pandemic times such as;

- *the migration to almost exclusively online payments and*
- *the facility to join the Society and to make grant applications online.*

We fully appreciate that some members are more comfortable with the old fashioned ways of papers application forms and receiving payments by cheque and we are only too happy to continue to provide this service.

For the past 2½ years, case work has been conducted online via email communication. For the previous 90 years, the Cases Committee had convened monthly to consider applications from our members.

While the email option gave a more immediate outcome for our members, it meant that the Cases Committee had to be on standby on an almost daily basis to consider applications. Bearing in mind that the Cases Committee are retired from work, this is a huge commitment on their part.

With the easing of restrictions, the decision has been made to return to in-person cases meetings.

However, we will retain some level of online communication to deal with urgent or emergency case.

MANY THANKS TO ...

1. Cases Committee

And speaking of the Cases Committee, the Society owes a massive debt of gratitude to **Joan Connolly, Frances McGahon** and John Meagher for their ongoing commitment and dedication to helping our members in need over many years.

They do so with empathy and understanding and, I know that all the staff in HQ are extremely appreciative of their contribution.

2. Trustee and Supervisory Committee

Michael Stapleton has joined the Supervisory Committee in my place since I moved to the role of Chairman. Michael joins with **Brian Duffy**, formerly of Dept of Social Protection and our Trustee, **John McKeon** who make up the Supervisory Committee.

I also wish to acknowledge our other Trustee, **Mr Niall Cody**, Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, who along with John McKeon have given their full support to the Society, particularly in the past few months in the midst of our staff changes.

In recent meetings with the Trustees, they have indicated further support for the Society which we hope will begin to bear fruit in the coming year.

3. Committee of Management

I also wish to thank my colleagues on the full Committee of Management most of who I have not clapped eyes on since the last Committee in 2019.

Indeed, 3 members of the Committee who have joined post-pandemic and we can finally meet **Valerie Power**, CSO Cork, **Kevin Grimes**, OPW Dublin and **John Concannon**, Valuation office in Dublin.

We are delighted to have some members put their names forward for the Committee this year and I would encourage more working staff to join the Committee in order to represent your colleagues on the ground. It is not a huge commitment timewise but may prove valuable to making your colleagues aware that that there is financial help and advice available to them within the civil service.

4. Employee Assistance Service

As ever, we value our relationship with the Employee Assistance Service and in doing so, ensure that the confidential ethos of both the EAS and the Society are honoured. The Employee Assistance officers continually look out for our members and also promote the Society on our behalf at every opportunity. And we are very glad to have representation from the EAS on the Committee of Management.

I would like to pass on our best wishes to **Geraldine Carey**, **Margaret Fagan** and **Frances Scott**, who retired from the EAS this year after many years' service and provided an invaluable link to many vulnerable Society members in times of difficulty.

5. Credit Unions

I would like to thank **Adie Walsh** in CANA Credit Union and **Paul Ryan** in the PSCU for their ongoing support and to their respective staff who work with us for the common good of easing financial concerns for our members.

And, many thank are due of course to our staff in HQ, Karen, Declan, Barbara and Carmel for handling the day-to-day calls on the Society and looking after our members in their times of need.

Go raibh mile maith agat

Sean Treanor

Chairperson

Public Service Friendly Society