**Board of Directors Meeting**

Tuesday 22nd February 2022 - 10:30

Virtual Board Meeting

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Adrienne Carmichael (Chair)

Tara Scott (Vice Chair)

David Nash

Les Robinson

Louise Dickins

Nigel Pollard

Noemi Alonso

Simon Allan

Geraldine Hamilton

Jenny Walters (Bulb Studios) – In Attendance, In Part

Fiona Campbell (Chief Executive)

Eleanor McBain (Membership/Admin)

Melanie Allen (Minutes)

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Chair, Adrienne Carmichael, wished everyone a happy new year, and welcomed all to the ASSC Virtual Board Meeting. She recognised the anticipated hope that 2022 would bring better things, had not quite been delivered. However, despite several challenges it was acknowledged that there were some unexpected positive things happening as a result of the short-term let licensing legislation passed in January by the Scottish Government. The ASSC is currently seeing a swathe of new members joining, with Membership Subscriptions (due on 1 February) being paid faster than we have ever known, so as far as membership is concerned we are set on a very positive course.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received by Barry Burton & Clare Winskill.

**3. Minutes of 6th December, and Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising, over & above items being discussed within the Agenda.

The Minutes were approved: proposed by Tara Scott & seconded by Les Robinson.

**4. Accounts**

* It was confirmed that 2021 was a phenomenal year for membership subscriptions and 2022 is seeing the same trend.
* The Profit & Loss accounts were distributed prior to the meeting, tabled and discussed.
* 635 members have paid already since 1 February. The income which has been received for the new subscription year was reiterated as exceptional, and much is attributed to the acknowledged value that the ASSC now provides to its Membership.
* It was noted that there had been lots of messages of support and thanks and it has been heartening for the staff team to experience these warm wishes after such a tough time.
* It was confirmed that the membership currently stands at 1369 members.
* In addition, it was acknowledged that there is also further continued support from industry membership which currently stands at:
* 51 Trade Suppliers
* 5 Trade Supplier Plus
* 15 Partners for Business

**5. Membership**

* It was acknowledged that the Membership continues to grow with 3 new members joining earlier that morning.
* It was advised that reminder for unpaid subscription invoices will be going out at the end of the week.
* Resignations – A record is being kept of any operators resigning and the reasoning behind each individual case. It was thought that many are selling or going to long term lets, with a significant amount retiring, with some retiring early to avoid the burden of STL Licensing.
* Also to note is that operators who have been positioned on the periphery of the organisation without joining in the past, are now subscribing following the uncertainty brought by the STL Licensing legislation.
* It was highlighted that recently some people looking to purchase property in Edinburgh have been seeking advice. Caution has been highlighted to these people, with the uncertainty of the planning control zone legislation being brought about by Edinburgh City Council which is of grave concern to all STL related businesses operating within the city.
* It is envisaged that licensing along with the pressures of control zone legislation will bring in more members to the ASSC, as people are seeking help and support to navigate through the challenges ahead.

**6. Chief Executive’s Report**

The Chief Executive’s Report had been circulated to the Board.

Fiona Campbell provided an overview of the key points to note since the last meeting, and the many challenges facing the ASSC.

* It was felt that 2022 in many respects had been a disaster to date.
* A significant factor for this was the huge disappointment over the decision by the Scottish Government to approve short-term let licensing legislation.
* It was advised that the next huge concern and challenge is planning control zones.
* Edinburgh City Council is forging ahead with proposals to establish a planning control zone for the whole of Edinburgh and it is envisaged that several other areas across Scotland could follow.
* It was queried whether any lines of communication exist with City of Edinburgh Council that could provide any positivity to the situation. Unfortunately, it was confirmed that there were no known options to pursue conversations directly with CEC, who are committed to the introduction of a Planning Control Zone.
* It is however hopeful that lines of conversation are open with other Councils who are considering the same approach and these avenues are being explored.
* It was suggested and agreed that a letter will be drafted by Burness Paull and sent to Councillor Adam McVey, Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council, highlighting concerns with legal compliance. It was suggested that a joint approach with Scottish Chamber of Commerce may be beneficial.
* It was felt that exploring the impact to the economy is a significant avenue to investigate.
* It was acknowledged that the argument in respect of human rights is not likely to stack up and make a case, due to the difficulty to quantify because planning control zones relates to businesses.
* The 2023 re-evaluation review for Short-Term Let Licensing was discussed in some detail.
* It was noted that the Cabinet Secretary for Housing had confirmed the intention for the review. Shona Robinson MSP told the committee the implementation of licensing will be reviewed in 2023 to ascertain the health of the sector. Concern was highlighted that this is not the true intention. It was noted, ascertaining the health of the sector is impossible due to the lack of baseline data. Therefore it was suggested that the ASSC works to undertake an independent assessment of the situation now as it currently stands and in the future. The assessment must be carried out in a robust and credible way so that Scottish Government cannot ignore the findings. Suggestions were made highlighting the benefits of using a university to undertake this work and the Moffatt Report was given as an example.
* Joining the working group was felt to be somewhat of a disaster, following the return to the group at the most recent meeting.
* It was emphasised that the future requirement for the ASSC will be to continue to be a beacon of support and advice, working with the communities in which we reside.

**7. Digital and Marketing Update**

**ASSC Membership Website & Platform**

* An update for the new ASSC Member website platform was provided.
* It was advised that despite assurances from Tall Projects, most recently in December, the ASSC Membership Website development had not been delivered on time or on budget.
* Concerns were raised on 10th January when the new website was presented in what was considered an unfinished and unviable state - far from complete.
* It was confirmed that multiple conversations have been undertaken with Tall Projects since that time to navigate what has gone wrong, what has not been delivered and why promises have not been kept.
* Most significantly the deliverables on invoicing and accounting including links to xero and direct debits were promised to be completed by 31st January.
* Assurances have been noted of this on previous Board Meeting Minutes and the disappointment around the lack of conviction from Tall Projects was duly noted.
* It was confirmed that legal advice is being sought and steps will be taken to fully ascertain the situation.

*Jenny from Bulb Studios joined the meeting.*

* Jenny provided an overview of the ASSC digital eco-system and presented options to deliver projects in unison.
* Discussions detailed the technology options to synchronise both the ASSC Website, and membership platform alongside the EmbraceScotland Website and listing platform.
* Jenny also provided an insight into the ongoing work being undertaken for the new EmbraceScotland website and the EmbraceScotland Marketing Campaign. It was confirmed that work is currently on schedule with the aim of an April completion date.
* Property listings and data - commission models were queried, it was highlighted that the EmbraceScotland Website will be marketed as commission free, with bookings going direct to the operator, plus it will provide a significant member benefit to the ASSC marketing members, and additional revenue for the ASSC in terms of membership.
* Thanks were given to Jenny at Bulb for providing support for this and providing options.
* It was suggested that more information is required for the board to have an appraisal of the situation:
  1. Costs on the options to successfully deliver the projects and details of the work required
  2. Costs to evaluate the recovery of subscription funds paid towards the work not delivered by Tall Projects.
* The Board agreed in principle that the preferred option to move forward would be to cut ties with Tall Projects subject to seeing figures for recovering projects & final costs to completion.
* The Board gave thanks and their appreciation to Eleanor for the hard work undertaken with new subscriptions and invoicing, resorting to the existing system and unexpectedly and successfully recovering what could have been a significant problem. It was also acknowledged the work undertaken in order to encourage subscriptions to come in on time and acknowledged the many messages of support received for the work being achieved.

**8. Strategic Plan 2022-2026**

It was requested that any thoughts, ideas or issues from Board Members, should be raised with Adrienne or Fiona.

**9. AOB**

**ASSC Regional Events**

* Aspirations to hold a regional event in May and another in October were cited subject to no new Covid-19 restrictions, planning will get underway in the next few weeks and more information will be provided.

End.