



enabling people with disabilities

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of
Ability West held on Monday, 27th May 2019,
at 7:30p.m., in The Salthill Hotel, Galway.**

PRESENT: Mr. Ray Kelly, Chairman, presiding
Mrs. Breda Crehan-Roche, Chief Executive
Mr. Patrick J. Daly, Company Secretary
Mr. John McHugo, Director of Finance
Attendees, Approx. 75

APOLOGIES: 23 apologies were received in advance of the meeting

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms. Carol A. Browne, Recording Secretary

Mr. Ray Kelly, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting of Ability West, and called on Matthew Brennan, Special Olympics Medal Winner, to commence the formalities and advise in relation to housekeeping rules.

1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF AGM 2018

Mr. Kelly asked that the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28th May 2018, as provided at the meeting, be taken as read. The minutes were accepted on the proposition of Mr. Jack King and seconded by Mr. Anthony O'Connor.

There were no matters arising.

2. ADDRESS BY CHAIRMAN OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MR. RAY KELLY

Mr. Kelly advised that this meeting provides an opportunity to review the performance of the organisation over the past year and look at how the current year is shaping up. He reported that the organisation continued to protect frontline services and supports during 2018. The organisation risk funded a number of safeguarding cases to ensure the safety of all individuals availing of our services.

Mr. Kelly advised that Ability West prepared its financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and the Companies Act 2014. Copies of the financial statements were provided at the AGM and are also available on the company website. Mr. Kelly referenced a number of sections in the annual report, in particularly the Directors' Report.

Mr. Kelly reported that the Charities Regulator published a "Charities Governance Code" in November 2018. All charities must be compliant with the code by January 2020 and work has commenced on this code.

Mr. Kelly advised that during 2018 work on the Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 concluded and he reported that there were many successful outcomes from this plan and referenced pages 17/18 of the annual report for an update.

Mr. Kelly reported that extensive consultation was undertaken with all stakeholders and the Board of Directors approved a new five year strategic plan from 2019 – 2023 with the plan being launched in February 2019. This strategic plan is available on our website.

Mr. Kelly advised that as part of compliance requirements, the Board of Directors set up a Nominations Committee in January 2018 to review the length of service of existing Board Members, recruitment of Directors and skill mix. In this regard, there were a number of changes to the Board. Mr. Kelly welcomed newly co-opted Board Members that had joined since July 2018, namely: Mr. Frank O'Connell, Mr. Cormac Flynn, Mr. Darragh Sheehy, Mr. Dermot O'Neill and Ms. Denise Ryan.

Mr. Kelly acknowledged and thanked Mr. Jack King, Mrs. Bridie Newell, Mrs. Marie O'Dowd and Mrs. Mary O'Mahony who retired from the Board in 2018. Mr. Kelly said that the organisation was very grateful to them for the many years of service to Ability West. Mr. Kelly advised that there are two retirements in May, both long-serving members of the Board, Mr. Paddy Daly and Mr. Páraic Lawless. He stated that their commitment, dedication and support to Ability West has been second-to-none and we are indebted to them for their volunteerism over the years.

Mr. Kelly acknowledged Mrs. Bridie Newell, and former members of the Tuam Branch, who retired as a branch in 2018 after 52 years of activity. Their volunteerism, support and assistance to children and adults with intellectual disability over this extraordinary length of time is very much valued by us.

Ability West is reliant on the generous support of branch members, staff, volunteers, the general public, and friends of the organisation for their assistance with supporting service users, organising and supporting fundraising events and raising awareness of intellectual disability and the services we provide. Mr. Kelly expressed his gratitude to all for their ongoing support and dedication to children and adults with intellectual disability and autism.

Mr. Kelly reported that fundraised monies provides the organisation with funds for our capital programme which includes: new buildings and refurbishment of existing buildings, the purchase of specialised equipment and minibuses for services. Mr. Kelly advised that without these funds it would be impossible to maintain and continue developing high quality services. Mr. Kelly thanked everyone involved in these events.

Mr. Kelly acknowledged the support and commitment of his fellow Board Members who work in a voluntary capacity and take their role as governors of the organisation very seriously which helps to set a high standard of governance that permeates throughout the organisation.

Mr. Kelly reported that the organisation continues to operate in financially difficult times and more and more in a compliance driven environment. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Mr. Kelly sincerely thanked the Chief Executive, Breda Crehan-Roche, members of the Senior Management Team, Middle and Frontline Managers and all staff for their ongoing hard work, dedication and commitment to providing high quality services and supports to people with intellectual disability and autism. Mr. Kelly also thanked Carol Browne for her work as Recording Secretary for Board meetings and this meeting. He acknowledged and thanked everyone who had supported Ability West during the past year.

Lastly, Mr. Kelly advised that he is stepping down as Chairman and a new Chairman would be elected directly after this meeting. He thanked everyone for their assistance and co-operation over the past three years and advised that he will be staying on as a Director and that he is looking forward to working with the new Chairman and the Board going forward.

3. ADDRESS BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, MRS. BREDA CREHAN-ROCHE

The Chief Executive welcomed the Chairman, Mr. Ray Kelly, service users, board members, branch members, staff, former staff, parents and family members, volunteers, colleagues and public representatives to the Annual General Meeting. She also welcomed Cathal Esler, Director of Human Resources, who joined Ability West in January.

The Chief Executive reported on the developments during 2018. We delivered on the final year of the Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and work commenced mid-2018 on a new five year Strategic Plan 2019-2023. She advised that extensive consultation took place and focus groups were held with key stakeholders including the people we support, the Service User Council, Board of Directors, Family Forum, Senior Management Team, Middle Management, Unit Directors, staff and volunteers across

the city and county services. The Chief Executive was pleased to advise that this resulted in an ambitious strategic plan which has eight strategic goals in the following areas:

1. Organisational Culture
2. Change Management
3. Effective Teams
4. Meaningful Outcomes
5. Community Inclusion
6. Securing Sustainable Resources
7. Continuous Quality Improvement, Monitoring and Evaluation
8. Communication

The Chief Executive reported that there were no funding cuts to the HSE allocation in 2018; the initial core funding allocation for the year was €24,946,643 which took into account the full year effect of funding provided in 2017, additional funding for some respite, funding to address some safeguarding issues, and also some once-off development funding for new day services. In 2018 Ability West received an allocation of €139,000 for centre-based respite as part of the €10m funding provided nationally for new respite developments. Grangemore Group Home in the city was one such service that benefitted from this new funding and last June we were delighted to welcome Minister of State for Disability, Finian McGrath, to meet with service users and families who benefitted from this allocation and to see at first hand the difference this funding made to service users and their families. Notwithstanding this, Ability West continued to face many challenges such as safeguarding; endeavouring to respond to the changing needs of ageing service users; adapting our services and supports for individuals with complex needs; managing compatibility; responding to emergencies and the ever-increasing demands for respite and community supports.

The Chief Executive advised that year on year we are finding service users have additional support requirements or 'changing needs', such as mobility issues related to age, cognitive changes and general age-related conditions. Where additional supports were required Ability West submitted business cases to the HSE to seek funding. In some cases, funding was received and we were able to respond within our core budget, and other times we had to risk fund services and supports.

The Chief Executive reported that for the past number of years we have seen increased non-pay costs which can be attributed to the costs associated with compliance, the rising cost of insurance, heating, motor fuel and the ongoing maintenance of our buildings and our ageing vehicle fleet. Ability West obtained access to the OGP (Office of Government Procurement) Framework in 2018 and since then some non-pay savings from having access to this framework have been made.

The Chief Executive acknowledged and thanked our staff, service users and families for their co-operation and assistance during the year. Despite the challenges we faced, she reported that we achieved a better than breakeven financial situation in 2018 which was particularly important given the deficits incurred in previous years.

In 2018 Ability West provided the following direct services:

- 138 special school places
- 437 adult day places
- 127 residential places
- 184 respite places, which provided 10,144 residential respite bed nights to adults, and 1,663 residential respite bed nights to children.
- 77 homesharing/shared living places
- 98 community support places, including out of county placements.

The Chief Executive reported that there have been no significant capital grants since 2008 for agencies like Ability West. She acknowledged the HSE for funding in 2018 for rental and commissioning of new community hubs for adults who left school and those who graduated from rehabilitative training. However, despite no significant capital funding, through fundraised monies and efficiencies, we were able to undertake extensive renovations in our services under our capital

programme, some of which are noted in the annual report. The Chief Executive advised that planning permission was sought and received for a number of capital developments including:

- An extension to Clochatuisce Group Home in the city to facilitate the mobility and ageing needs of the residents. This project will be completed by year end.
- An extension to St. Francis Adult Day Service, Kilkerrin, to accommodate service users moving from Dochas Adult Day Service, Glenamaddy, and extensive renovations to the Dochas building for respite to transfer from Mountbellew as capacity has become an issue in Mountbellew Day Service.

During 2018, we purchased two sites; one in Carraroe to accommodate a new school building and another in Headford to accommodate a new day service/hub, trike park and eventually residential/respite services. Funds raised by Boston Scientific when Ability West was their charity partner in 2012 have been ring-fenced for the development of a trike park and we are a step closer to making this trike park a reality. Planning for both of these projects has commenced, however, the Headford project is dependent on fundraised money and we are focussing our fundraising efforts over the coming years to develop the services in the Headford area.

During the year we had to decommission three buses due to their age and the cost of operating. We were able to replace a bus in Sylvan and Clochatuisce Group Homes and a bus for use by a number of city services. Thanks to two very generous donations to the Glenamaddy Branch and some fundraised money we were able to purchase a bus for Dochas/St. Francis Adult Day Service. We will take delivery of this bus shortly.

The Chief Executive acknowledged staff member, Edel Cunningham, who started a fundraising campaign to raise funds to purchase a bus for the services in Portumna. Edel was joined by the Friends of Portumna, families, staff and the local community who fundraised tirelessly for this campaign. She thanked all involved and everyone who supported the various fundraising events. The new bus was delivered to the Portumna services last month and will make a big difference there.

The Chief Executive advised that a new route was added to our existing transport routes to accommodate new school leavers last September. Last August training modules on the introduction to positive behaviour support and autism spectrum disorder, and safeguarding vulnerable persons awareness were delivered to bus drivers and escorts which was very well received.

The Chief Executive reported that a new community hub was set up in Tuam for school leavers and adults who graduated from rehabilitative training. This hub was set up in line with New Directions HSE interim standards which embrace the premise of contribution and participation in the community. She thanked all involved in setting up this service. A new hub in Galway City also replaced two individual hubs and extensive works were carried out to adapt the hub for the individuals accessing this service. Further works have more recently been done to enhance the environment for some service users availing of this service.

Since HIQA became responsible for the regulation of residential and respite services for children and adults with disabilities in November 2013, re-registration takes place every three years. The Chief Executive advised that all Ability West's residential and respite services have been re-registered, the exception being one designated centre that is not due for re-registration until later in 2019. Two newly opened services, Teach Michel Apartments in Galway City and Riverside Apartments in Tuam, were successfully registered with HIQA in 2018. These properties are owned by Carraig Dubh Housing Association and Ability West is the service provider. A Service Level Agreement is in place between both companies in relation to housing and services and supports.

During 2018 we had 25 unannounced HIQA inspections and the learning and outcomes from these inspections has transferred to all our residential and respite services. The Chief Executive thanked the Persons in Charge, their teams, staff in Quality and Compliance, Client Services, Human Resources, Finance and the Chief Executive's Office.

NSAI completed a surveillance audit last May during which the Auditor assessed our services against the Excellence Through People 1000:2012 standard and we were successful in maintaining this accreditation. The Auditor reported that the feedback from staff interviewed was consistently that they were happy with their role in the organisation. In April 2019 we had a follow up audit and the Chief Executive advised that we were again successful in maintaining this accreditation.

All of our services are accredited to the ISO standard I.S. EN 9001:2015 which has increased focus on leadership, management, service user (customer) focus and continuous improvement. The NSAI completed a surveillance audit in May 2018 and this audit went very well with Ability West retaining this standard. The Chief Executive thanked Eileen Costello-Conneely, Quality and Compliance Manager, and all involved.

The Chief Executive reported that the Best Buddies Ball took place in May 2018, which was an extra-special occasion as we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Best Buddies Programme. This year the Best Buddies Ball took place earlier this month and the Chief Executive reported that everyone enjoyed a great night.

The Service User Council continued to meet during 2018 and they initiated a new Advocacy Champions Programme. The council also held a Consultation Day in November 2018 which was well attended by service users. The Chief Executive stated that both she and the Senior Management Team attended part of this meeting to answer questions about access to volunteers, funding, respite, etc. and to listen to views and suggestions. The council also participated in the new strategic plan consultation process, reviewed our Vision and Mission statements and they provided important guidance on the changes we needed to make to these statements. The Chief Executive acknowledged the great work undertaken by the members of the Service User Council and Chairperson, John Farragher.

In February last year Ability West was delighted and honoured to welcome the Presentation Sisters back to Blackrock House. A plaque was unveiled in recognition of their generous donation of the Blackrock House building to the organisation in 1999. This building serves as the headquarters for Ability West and also accommodates an adult day service. Prior to that it was a residential hostel operated by the organisation. The Chief Executive said that the organisation is indebted to the Presentation Sisters for donating this magnificent building to Ability West.

The Chief Executive reported that sadly, the Tuam Branch of Ability West retired in 2018 after 52 years in operation. She stated that the solid commitment, support and dedication of the branch members was very much appreciated. She wished them all the very best in the future.

The Chief Executive reported that there continues to be challenging times ahead and we must continue to provide our services efficiently and effectively. The changing needs of service users is a particular challenge with increased requirements for buildings that suit people with limited mobility, behaviours that challenge, complexities and comorbidity. There are increased demands for respite and residential services and we are challenged in our response to same due to lack of funding. Families require respite and this is a very valuable resource for them. Respite care is not a luxury, it is a key component of any caregiving programme. There are clear benefits for the loved one as well as the caregiver and we do our very best to help all. We also augment traditional residential respite with community supports and short breaks. Parents of our older service users, who have cared so diligently for their sons and daughters, are now getting older themselves and are finding it difficult to continue to care for their loved ones. Unfortunately, we have waiting lists for residential and respite services, however we work hard in partnership with the HSE to offer services and prioritise emergency cases.

Sadly, during 2018, a number of service users passed away: Lorna Manogue, Paddy McGrath, Seamus Molloy and John Walshe, and more recently this year Hughie O'Toole, James Carty and Carmel King. Sadly, Keith Kelly staff member in the Tuam Road Hub and formerly of St. Joseph's Training Centre, passed away suddenly in April. Indeed many of our service users, families, staff, branch, board members and volunteers also experienced bereavements and we extend our deepest sympathies to all.

The Chief Executive thanked Chairman, Ray Kelly, and Board Members for their guidance and assistance and for giving so generously of their time and expertise to Ability West. She also thanked service users, their parents, carers and families for their ongoing co-operation. The Chief Executive thanked the Directors and Assistant Directors of Client Services, Finance and Human Resources, Department Heads, Managers, Unit Directors, staff, branch members, Community Employment Scheme and TUS participants, and all volunteers for their enormous contributions during 2018. The dedication and commitment of staff and volunteers across the whole organisation is truly exceptional. The Chief Executive also gave a special thanks to Carol A. Browne, Communications and Executive Officer Manager, for her ongoing support and invaluable assistance.

The Chief Executive thanked the HSE, in particular Mr. Tony Canavan, Chief Officer, Ms. Elaine Prendergast, Head of Service - Social Care, Mr. John Fitzmaurice, General Manager - Disability Services, Ms. Mary O'Donnell, Disability Services Manager Galway, Mr. Liam Fogarty, Head of Finance, and Mr. Gerry Burke, Integrated Services, Community Health Organisation West, for their ongoing support and assistance. She also thanked the many statutory, non-statutory and voluntary service providers that Ability West works with for their ongoing co-operation and assistance.

She advised that we will continue to work together to provide person centred quality services and supports to ensure that the people we are privileged to work with, be of service to and support are empowered and enabled to live the lives of their choice in their local communities.

In conclusion the Chief Executive thanked the Salthill Hotel who selected Ability West as one of two chosen charities for 2019 and acknowledged their support to date.

4. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2018

Mr. McHugo reported that the Financial Statements for the past year were reviewed in advance of their formal adoption, and a full copy of the Financial Statements was provided for consideration at the meeting. Mr. McHugo noted that this was a departure from the practice in the past when only an extract from the audited accounts was provided in the Annual Report. Changes in legislation and in particular the commencement of the Companies Act 2014 has meant that our Financial Statements must meet the new requirements laid down by the Act. In order to ensure compliance, the Financial Statements since 2015 have been prepared and audited in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in Ireland". Additionally, even though the Charity Regulator has not yet finalised the adoption of the "Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities", or "Charities SORP", the Directors have elected to have regard to the "Charities SORP" in the preparation of the Financial Statements.

Mr. McHugo acknowledged the presence of Mr. Dermot Callanan from FCC Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors and acknowledged the help and assistance provided by FCC in the preparation of the financial statements.

Prior to FRS 102 and the "Charities SORP", Revenue Income/Expenditure and Capital Income/Expenditure were recorded separately in our annual financial statements, however in the new format all income and expenditure excluding expenditure on Fixed Assets is now recorded in "The Statement of Financial Activities" (SOFA), on page 10.

In "The Statement of Financial Activities" Income and related Expenditure is recorded under the headings of Restricted and Unrestricted Funds and Pension Funds. "Restricted Funds" relate to funds which we receive that must be expended as contracted, for example, the HSE provide us with funding on an annual basis which must be expended in accordance with the annual Service Arrangement in place. On the other hand, "Unrestricted Funds" refers to funds received which are spent or applied at the discretion of the organisation. Fundraising and donations are an example of this, where the funds received are spent on the development of buildings and to purchase much needed equipment and minibuses. The "Pension Funds" refer to the required accounting treatment of our old Defined Benefit Pension Scheme.

Mr. Mc Hugo highlighted particular items of importance for consideration. All income and expenditure excluding expenditure on Fixed Assets are reported in “The Statement of Financial Activities” (SOFA) on page 10 of the Financial Statements. Under the heading of “Unrestricted Funds” various sources of income (Incoming Resources) are detailed. With regard to “Fundraising and Donations” a total of €170,186 was received in 2018. During the year Branches raised €22,025 and a branch by branch summary is detailed in the annual report. Mr. McHugo stated that this is a significant sum and expressed his gratitude to the branches for the fundraising carried out. In addition to Branch fundraising, a further €148,161 was received in 2018 from various other fundraising initiatives and donations. On behalf of the organisation, Mr. McHugo expressed sincere thanks to everybody involved in raising and/or contributing over €170,000 last year. Without this continuing support, we would not be in a position to upgrade/develop buildings and to purchase much needed minibuses and equipment.

The other income included under the heading of “Unrestricted Funds” includes various contributions, interest earned, and other sundry income received during the year. In total €344,785 of “Unrestricted Funds” is recorded for the year and this has been added to the balance on our “Unrestricted Designated Fund”.

Included in “The Statement of Financial Activities” (SOFA) is Income and Expenditure under the heading of “Restricted Funds”. Total Restricted Income for the year amounted to over €27.43m and this comprised of almost €26.373m from the HSE and €1.059m from other sources. Mr. McHugo referred to page 28 which outlines a breakdown of the income received from all sources. When associated expenditure of €27.016m and a Pension related adjustment of €0.104m are taken into account, a Surplus in Restricted Funds of €311,445 is recorded for the year. However, when this is added to the opening negative balance of (€353,588) in “Restricted Funds”, the closing balance on this fund amounts to a negative balance of (€42,143) as at 31st December 2018.

The other information reported in “The Statement of Financial Activities” (SOFA) under the heading of “Pension Reserve” refers to the accounting treatment of the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme. Comprehensive details in relation to this can be found in Note 14 on pages 21 to 24 in the Financial Statements.

From an overall perspective the financial results for the year as detailed in “The Statement of Financial Activities” (SOFA) can be summarised as follows;

Net Movement in “ <i>Unrestricted Funds</i> ”	€344,785
Net Movement in “ <i>Restricted Funds</i> ”	€311,445
Net Movement in “ <i>Pensions Reserve</i> ”	(€99,930)
Overall Net Movement in Funds	€556,300

Pages 28 and 29 of the Financial Statements contain Supplementary Information which provide comprehensive details of both Income and Expenditure analysed under the headings of Revenue and Capital.

Mr. McHugo referred to the Balance Sheet on Page 11 of the Financial Statements, where the overall financial position of Ability West is detailed as at 31st December 2018. It can be noted that total Net Assets amount to €21,608,867 as at 31st December 2018 compared to €21,052,567 a year earlier. The layout of the Balance Sheet is broadly similar to previous years however Mr. McHugo specifically focused on two areas. He highlighted that the Tangible Fixed Assets increased during the year, detailed in Note 9 on page 19. He also highlighted three Funds which can be summarised as follows;

1. The “*Restricted Funds*” of (€42,143) refers to ongoing revenue operations, i.e. the balance of funds from the HSE and our other funders. The balance on this fund was (€353,588) as at 31st December 2017 so the improvement is to be welcomed.
2. The “*Unrestricted Designated Funds*” of €19,438,050 primarily refers to Capital funds {€18,793,092} which are represented on the Balance Sheet as Tangible Assets such as Properties, Motor Vehicles, Financial Assets, etc.

3. The “*Pension Scheme Reserve*” of €2,212,960 refers to the Defined Benefit Pension Scheme and this is matched by the Pension Asset shown under “Fixed Assets”.

While Mr. McHugo referred to a number of the Notes to the Financial Statements previously, he advised that there is a wealth of financial information contained in the various Notes on pages 13 to 26 and he advised that when these Notes are read in conjunction with the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and the Cash Flow Statement, a comprehensive and transparent overview of the financial affairs of Ability West is provided.

Our Financial Statements are compliant with the reporting requirements of both the Companies Office and the Office of the Charity Regulator. Additionally, we are confident that they provide full transparency of our financial affairs.

In conclusion, Mr. McHugo acknowledged and thanked the Board of Directors and the Finance Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Kevin Flavin, the Chief Executive, his colleagues on the Senior Management Team and the various Managers and Unit Directors throughout the organisation for their help and support in the ongoing management of our finances.

Mr. McHugo also thanked Mr. Tony Canavan, Ms. Elaine Prendergast, Mr. John Fitzmaurice, Ms. Mary O'Donnell, Mr. Liam Fogarty and in particular Mr. Gerry Burke from the HSE for their ongoing support.

Mr. McHugo thanked his colleagues in the Finance, Administration and Human Resources Departments for their ongoing commitment and hard work. Their ongoing work in the background supporting the provision of services at the frontline is much appreciated.

Mr. Paraic Lawless proposed and Mrs. Breda Dolan seconded the adoption of the Annual Report and Audited Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2018.

5. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Mr. Kelly informed the meeting that the organisation's Auditors, FCC Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, had indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with Section 383(2) of the Companies Act 2014. The appointment and remuneration of the auditors was proposed by Mr. Kevin Newell and this was seconded by Mr. Anthony O'Connor

6. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Paddy Daly, Company Secretary, reported that as per Articles 4 and 8 of the Articles of Association, regions were advised to nominate two Directors to the Board, one of whom must be a family member. A family member is defined as a parent, grandparent, legal guardian, sibling, spouse of a sibling, child of a sibling, aunt, uncle, spouse of an aunt or uncle or child of an aunt or uncle of a service user. Mr. Daly was notified of four regional nominees by 1st May 2018 as follows:

Galway City Region Kevin Newell and Ray Kelly
Galway West Region Sean McGrath
North Galway Region Mick Finnerty

The Company Secretary called for ratification of these nominees and these were ratified on the proposition of Mrs. Breda Dolan and this was seconded by Mr. Dermot O'Neill.

7. ASSISTED DECISION MAKING

Ms. Deirdre O'Donoghue, Speech and Language Therapy Manger, presented on the Assisted Decision Making legislation and explained that the UNCRPD promotes assisted decision making as a vehicle by which people with disabilities can exercise their legal capacity to the greatest extent possible. Ms. O'Donoghue reported that the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 ensures the autonomy of adults in making personal decisions. She explained the types of decisions and

defined what assisted decision making was, and reported on capacity and its meaning in relation to decision making. Ms. O'Donoghue stated that adults are presumed to have the ability/capacity to make decisions about their personal lives.

Ms. O'Donoghue defined capacity and discussed in detail the provisions within the Act for circumstances where someone may lack capacity. She said that capacity should be assumed unless proved otherwise. She discussed the guiding principles in great detail and then detailed the functions of the Decision Support Service (DSS), such as investigating complaints, reviewing Wards of Court and maintaining a register of decision making representatives, among other functions.

Finally, Ms. O'Donoghue discussed communication, specifically how we can meaningfully learn about a person's will and preference so that it can be reflected in decisions made with them or when decisions are to be made for them; particularly when they do not understand or use formal communication systems.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Newell proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, Mr. Ray Kelly, and acknowledged his commitment and dedication to Ability West in his Chairmanship of the Board for the past three years. He reported that Mr. Kelly brought huge expertise to the role of Chairman, noting that he is very professional and ensures that the business of the Board is fair, equitable and transparent. This vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Cormac Flynn and seconded by Mr. Frank O'Connell.

In response Mr. Kelly thanked his fellow Board Members for their support over the last three years. He also thanked the Chief Executive, Mrs. Breda Crehan-Roche, Ms. Carol Browne, and members of the Senior Management Team. He said that he found the role challenging, but a great learning experience and that it had been an honour and privilege to serve as Chairman.

There were no questions arising. The Chairman concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

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