



enabling people with disabilities

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday, 13 June 2022, at 7:00p.m.

<b>PRESENT:</b>	<b>Mr. Sean McGrath, Vice Chairperson (Acting Chairperson)</b> <b>Ms. Audrey Pidgeon, Chief Executive</b> <b>Mr. Dermot O'Neill, Company Secretary</b> <b>Mr. John McHugo, Director of Finance</b> <b>Mr. Mick Finnerty, Board Member</b> <b>Mr. James McNabb, Board Member</b> <b>Mr. Declan Noone, ICT Manager</b> <b>Mr. Dermot Callanan, FCC Chartered Accountant &amp; Auditor</b> <b>Total Attendees, Approx. 61</b>
<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	<b>16 apologies were received in advance of the meeting</b>
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	<b>Ms. Paulette Cully, Recording Secretary</b>

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In the Chairperson's absence, Mr. Sean McGrath, Acting Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting of Ability West and advised in relation to housekeeping rules. Mr. McGrath handed over to Deputy Mayor of Galway City, Cllr. Colette Connolly.

### **1. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF AGM 2021**

Mr. McGrath asked that the minutes of the AGM held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021, as provided at the meeting, be taken as read. The minutes were accepted on the proposition of Dermot O'Neill and seconded by Anthony O'Connor.

There were no matters arising.

### **2. MAYORAL ADDRESS**

Mayor Connolly thanked Ability West for extending the invitation to attend the AGM again this year. The Mayor said it is a pleasure to acknowledge the great work that Ability West does and indeed, has done for 60 years. She congratulated the organisation, on achieving this significant milestone. The founding members, early leaders and branches in the organisation, who had the drive to set up services in the absence of state funding, deserve huge thanks for their foresight, efforts and determination for children with an intellectual disability all those years ago. The current board and executive similarly are recognised for ensuring the organisation continues to thrive and grow and remains an important person centred provider for children and adults with an intellectual disability across Galway City and County.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the many individuals and families availing of Ability West's services. Mayor Connolly acknowledged that it was a huge relief to many when day services re-commenced in September last and that services continue today.

Ability West is a grassroots organisation set up in 1962 by Parents and Friends. Huge work was undertaken in communities across the city and county to establish a school and services and these community roots remain

very strong today with 64 Ability West services now in operation and Ability West is patron of four special schools.

Local supports are still vitally important to the sustainability of Ability West's services and the people availing of these services. One of Ability West's aims under their Strategic Plan is to encourage and enable people to participate in community activities and contribute in a meaningful way to the wider society and environment and this is something that is achieved every day.

Mayor Connolly acknowledged the impact on Ability West with regard to fundraising efforts which was, of course decimated by the pandemic. She expressed hope that Ability West will recover and resume its fundraising programme with the help of their strong local communities.

Mayor Connolly wished success for the future and many congratulations again on your 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### **3. ADDRESS BY ACTING CHAIRPERSON OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MR. SEAN MCGRATH**

Mr. McGrath welcomed Mayor of Galway, Collette Connelly, Senator Pauline O'Reilly, Board Members, Service Users, Parents, Family Members, Chief Executive, Staff, Invited Guests and friends to Ability West's AGM 2022. Mr. McGrath, Vice Chairperson explained that he would be chairing the meeting in the Chairman's absence. He welcomed everyone to the AGM, the first in-person AGM since 2019. He also welcomes all those who joined the meeting online.

The AGM is an opportunity to look back on the organisation's performance of the last year and look at how this year is shaping up. Last year was a busy and challenging one for the organisation as it went through various waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ability West was deemed 'an essential service' by Government in 2020, and continued to provide services to the children and adults we support, albeit at reduced levels in some cases. We were very pleased to return to almost full capacity in the latter months of 2021. Many service users and staff availed of the national roll-out of the vaccination programme and this had a positive impact on the delivery of services and allayed a lot of anxiety for everyone.

Our frontline staff and back office teams continued to work incredibly hard for the second year of the pandemic, often under significant pressures at peak periods of the virus. Mr. McGrath thanked all our teams for their dedication and commitment to the people we support. He also acknowledged the support we received from the Health Service Executive, Health Protection and Surveillance Centre, and the Department of Health during 2021.

Ability West has prepared its financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice and the Companies Act 2014. The full audited accounts for 2021 are available on the Ability West website on [www.abilitywest.ie](http://www.abilitywest.ie) and hard copies were made available to those in attendance at the meeting. The Directors' Report also provides details about our structure, governance and management.

The Board of Directors' annual visits to services were again impacted due to the pandemic and these will be scheduled when it is safe to do so.

The Board of Directors reviewed compliance with the Charities Governance Code during the year and a Compliance Report outlining how the organisation complies with the 6 principles and 49 standards within the code was completed. One area identified for action was an external board evaluation and this process commenced in November 2021, with a completed evaluation report provided in January this year. The Board of Directors recently met to review the recommendations from this report and agreed various actions.

Mr. McGrath welcomed two new Directors to the Board, Dr. Nicola de Taranto and Mr. James McNabb, whose nominations, through the Family Forum, were ratified at the AGM in July 2021, in line with the Ability West Constitution. Mr. McGrath thanked them and all Directors for their commitment and dedication to the children

and adults we support. We were unable to hold an election process this year and my letter to you last month refers and Company Secretary, Mr. Dermot O’Neill, will brief further regarding same under item 6 of the agenda.

Mr. McGrath thanked Mr. Anthony O’Connor who retired as a long-serving Director in April 2021. Throughout Anthony’s tenure he showed great commitment and drive to improve the quality of services for the people we support, and we are very grateful to him for his generous volunteerism over the years. We will have a presentation for Anthony later in the meeting. Mr. McGrath acknowledged and thanked Mr. Darragh Sheehy, Ms. Denise Ryan and Mr. Kevin O’Flatharta for their input, expertise and volunteerism with Ability West. They resigned their directorships in February, November and December 2021 respectively and Mr. McGrath wished them well.

Mr. McGrath also thanked Mr. John O’Dea, former Chairperson of our Human Rights Committee. John was a committee member for 2 years prior to taking up the Chairperson’s role which he held for 8 years. Mr. McGrath acknowledged John’s commitment to upholding the rights of people with an intellectual disability.

While our fundraising efforts were significantly hampered throughout the pandemic we took the opportunity to review the role and future of fundraising in Ability West. Mr. McGrath welcomed Michael Flanagan to Ability West. Michael took up the role of Community Development Officer in February and he is working to rebuild our fundraising programme for the coming years. Mr. McGrath acknowledged and thanked everyone who supported us during 2021.

Ability West celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022 which is a significant milestone for the organisation. It is a great opportunity to look back and see the huge progress that has been made to improve the lives of the children and adults we support. We had a number of 60<sup>th</sup> parties in May 2022 and there was great joy and happiness to get together and celebrate, particularly after the difficult couple of years everyone has had. Other events are being planned including a variety concert in October and more information will be provided in due course.

The work we do is very much strengthened by our many friends, supporters, volunteers and our statutory funders, including the Health Service Executive and the Departments of Education and Skills, and Social Protection. We are very appreciative of this support and on behalf of the Directors Mr. McGrath thanked them for their support.

Finally Mr. McGrath thanked his fellow Directors for their support and commitment and on behalf of the Directors, also thanked Audrey Pidgeon, Chief Executive, the Senior Management Team, and all staff for their hard work and dedication during what has been another very challenging year for service provision in Ability West.

#### **4. ADDRESS BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, MS. AUDREY PIDGEON**

The Chief Executive. Ms. Audrey Pidgeon joined the vice-Chairman in welcoming all in attendance to the 2022 Annual General Meeting of Ability West. The Chief Executive stated that she would be providing an update on Ability West services as they currently stand, looking back on achievements of the last year and how things look for the future. She also presented the Ability West Annual Report for 2021 and stated that copies are available at the meeting and the report is available on our website, under resources.

#### **COVID-19**

The pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the delivery of services, with only ‘essential’ services continuing into the early months of 2021. However, while service delivery was impacted, the supports and efforts of our staff teams were not. Staff continued to offer supports through innovative approaches, including remote supports and community based initiatives where access to on-site services was not possible. The Chief Executive acknowledged and thanked the staff teams who worked incredibly hard to safely manage COVID-19 outbreaks in services, while also ensuring continuity of supports to people we support and staff. We had a

particularly difficult six months, from November 2021 to April 2022 and frontline and on-call teams put in significant hours and work, in addition to their existing workload. The Chief Executive thanked them sincerely for their dedication and commitment to the people we serve, alongside those staff who returned early from annual leave to support the on-call teams, deliver PPE stock, and provide testing over the Christmas and New Year period. The Critical Incident Response Team remained active throughout the year, with focus on reviewing and implementing guidance received from the Department of Health, HSE, and Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) regarding infection prevention and control requirements in service provision.

The Chief Executive thanked the nurses working across services who completed training in order to provide in-house COVID-19 testing; thanks also to administration staff who facilitated the testing programme. This testing reduced the dependency on accessing appointments in HSE Testing Centres, particularly at peak waves of the virus, and provided a more bespoke approach to testing for people we support who would have otherwise struggled to attend a large testing centre.

It was with great relief that Ability West was included in the national vaccination programme. The vaccination programme gave great hope and positivity to people we support, their families and our staff and there was a significant take-up of vaccinations across these cohorts. Vaccines were prioritised for the most vulnerable people in our services initially, followed by those we support aged over 65 years, and then remaining staff and people we support. A booster programme was rolled out by the HSE and similarly these were rolled out to people we support and staff. The availability of a second booster has been offered recently to those over 65 years of age in our residential services.

There was a long awaited and very welcome return to day services from September 2021, although challenges remained in terms of transport (social distancing on buses) and maintaining social distancing in services while increasing capacity. Our risk assessment process ensured that we were increasing capacity in as safe a manner as possible, particularly in services where we have high numbers attending. As always, our frontline teams and managers responded positively to the challenges faced and those we support were delighted to be back with their peers and enjoying life again.

The statistics on page 7 of the Annual Report demonstrate the significant increase in cases between 2020 and 2021. Unfortunately, very high numbers of positive cases were recorded this year and the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases since the beginning of the pandemic are as follows:

Positive Cases per year

2020	18
2021	133
2022	392 (to end May 2022)

Similarly, there was an increase in the number of outbreaks in services as follows:

Outbreaks per year

2020	2
2021	12
2022	19 (to end May)

Schools under the patronage of Ability West have also been significantly impacted by the pandemic with many pupils and their families suffering as a result of school/classroom closures due to outbreaks.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic which have continued into 2022, Ability West continue to maintain business as usual. Progress on performance in relation to the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 is available in the 2021 Annual Report, from page 22 onwards. A copy of the Strategic Plan is available on our website at [www.abilitywest.ie](http://www.abilitywest.ie) and hard copies are also available on request.

## **FUNDING**

### *Final Core Funding*

The final core funding allocation from the HSE (Community Healthcare West) for 2021 was €30,484,539. This included: the full year effect of new funding provided in 2020, pay restoration, the provision of services for 2021 school leavers, new residential funding and sundry other funding adjustments. The Chief Executive acknowledged the HSE's continued support for the provision of specific funding to alleviate the effects of the pandemic.

We continue to be challenged by the changing needs of the people we support. This has been further compounded by the disruption on people and families when services were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, many of whom were already struggling prior to the pandemic. The area of greatest need continues to be the complex support needs of children and adults who require more intensive services, and an increasing number of families who are struggling to provide this level of care in the family home. Ability West is also challenged to meet the needs of people in our services who are experiencing significant decline in mobility, cognitive changes and additional age-related conditions. This places a huge demand on our limited Multi-Disciplinary Team, waiting lists to access services, access to aids and equipment (e.g. wheelchairs), and the environments where we provide supports that need to be adapted to meet the needs of those who access our services.

### *Non-Pay Costs/Budget Challenges*

Ability West services are consistently challenged to meet ever-increasing non-pay costs, most notably the rising cost of insurance. In particular, Employer's Liability has seen significant growth:

- 2016 - €93,837.24
- 2022 - €346,401.30
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This is an increase of **269%** in 6 years which is unsustainable for this organisation. Ability West is not delegated to the State Claims Agency's General Indemnity Scheme. However, Ability West would very much welcome inclusion under the General Indemnity Scheme. Other rising non-pay costs include motor fuel, heating, and the ongoing maintenance of our buildings/vehicles.

Ability West achieved a better than break-even financial result in 2021 which was primarily due to the restricted service provision arising from the pandemic, and also once-off income received towards the latter end of the year. The financial statements for 2021 were completed using the Financial Reporting Standard FRS102 and drafted cognisant of the Charities SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice). The 2021 Financial Statements will be present by John McHugo, Director of Finance later in the meeting.

### *Strengthening Disability Services Funding*

Ability West was delighted to receive funding of €40,000 under the Strengthening Disability Services Fund for the development of sensory gardens in Holly Services (children's respite), Galway City, and St. Dymphna's Day Service, Portumna. Both projects will significantly enhance the experience of those who access these services. We have been allocated funding of €116,600 for new posts to support the delivery of the New Directions standards and Person Centred Planning framework in our day services. The Chief Executive was pleased to announce that Mary Foyle has been appointed as the Day Services Development Officer. Mary has previously held the role of Respite and Community Services Manager in Ability West and she will be greatly missed in this role, however, recruitment for her successor is well underway.

The number of staff and people we support grew in 2021 and we are delighted that they have all settled in well in their respective placements and roles. We also said goodbye to a number of people we support and staff who have moved on to other opportunities and we wish them all well in the future.

## **SERVICE DELIVERY**

### *Service Provided*

The Chief Executive reported that during 2021, Ability West provided the following:

- 159 special school places
- 468 adult day places
- 132 residential places
- 82 community support places
- 144 individuals accessed respite places, which provided
  - 1,847 residential respite bed nights to adults, and
  - 10,360 residential respite bed nights to children.

Respite nights were significantly reduced on the previous year due to reduced capacity in our respite centres for public health reasons.

## **PROJECTS**

Ability West participated in a number of projects during 2021, as outlined on pages 8 and 9 of the Annual Report. In particular, I would draw your attention to the ongoing collaboration with the NUIG Centre for Disability Law and Policy and Proactive Carers Group. Ability West applied to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's (IHREC's) Human Rights and Equality Grant Scheme 2021-22 and we were successful in our application for funding for a 12 month project, with a working title of "*What Happens When They Are Gone?*" The research aims to document the experience of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in their search for housing and residential services, particularly as parents and families seek to plan ahead of their advancing years.

## **PROGRESSING DISABILITY SERVICES**

A significant change in the delivery of multi-disciplinary therapy services for children in schools (for whom we are patron) and respite services took effect from the end of 2021; with the roll-out of the Children's Disability Network Teams. The children's caseloads were handed over to the teams from November 2021 to end January 2022. Significant work was involved in ensuring the preparedness of this transition and the Chief Executive acknowledged all those involved for their hard work and support.

## **CAPITAL UPDATE**

During 2021 we undertook essential maintenance and renovations on a number of our buildings which were funded from efficiencies achieved and ring-fenced fundraised monies. These included: installation of French doors in a number of bedrooms for emergency egress in residential services, renovation to toileting/showering facilities, kitchen replacements in residential services, and repurposing works to provide additional capacity in day services.

Every year we receive great support from participants on the Community Employment Scheme and Galway Rural Development's Rural Social and TÚS Schemes, and 2021 was no exception. They undertook external painting works, power washing of buildings and general maintenance. The Chief Executive acknowledged their assistance with this work, which is essential in the upkeep of our service locations.

## **NEW DAY SERVICE HUBS**

Four new Day Service Hubs were set up in Creggs, Portumna, Mountbellew and Tuam to accommodate a number of school leavers and everyone has settled in well. The hubs operate in line with the HSE's New Directions Interim Standards which embrace the premise of contribution and participation in the community. The Chief Executive thanked all those involved in setting up these new services and wished everyone availing of services in the hubs the very best.

An official opening of the Portumna Hub was held in November and it was a lovely opportunity to celebrate the occasion with everyone who will avail of this and other local services, families, staff and stakeholders. Minister for Disability, Anne Rabbitte TD, officially opened the hub; as well as representatives from the HSE, Chief Officer, Breda Crehan-Roche, and General Manager for Disability Services, Alma Joyce, and Brothers of Charity

Services Ireland – West Region Director of Services, Eamon Loughrey. The Chief Executive thanked all involved for celebrating this occasion with us.

### **NEW RESIDENTIAL SERVICE**

Funding for a new residential service for four young adults was received from the HSE. We were fortunate to identify and purchase a property in Galway City which underwent significant refurbishment in late 2021 and into 2022. The new service has been registered with HIQA and is now operational. The Chief Executive advised that the residents are transitioning to their new home and are settling in well.

Given the current housing crisis, it is becoming increasingly difficult to source suitable properties to meet the needs of the people we support and this house will meet the needs of these individuals for many years.

### **TRANSPORT**

During the year new vehicles were added to our fleet for Clochan and Fairview services. The purchase of same was possible through a combination of efficiencies achieved and funds raised/donated. Ability West also submitted applications for Clár Funding for new buses for our Mountbellew and Grange View Services, which were approved, and these vehicles were delivered during the year.

### **SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

A new school building for St. Oliver's Special School, Tuam, was completed in March and the school opened in April 2021. It is an expansive building with state-of-the art features that enable inclusivity, accessibility and person-centred learning experiences. Congratulations to all involved and we wish the pupils many happy years of learning and growth in this lovely environment.

As patron of St. Teresa's Special School, Ballinasloe, we were delighted to meet with An Taoiseach, Micheál Martin TD, Minister for Education and Skills, Norma Foley TD and Minister for Disability, Anne Rabbitte TD, in November 2021. Funding for a new school building for St. Teresa's was announced, which is essential to support the pupils attending this school. We look forward to this development in the coming years.

Lastly, extensions to both Tigh Nan Dooley and St. Joseph's Special Schools are currently in the planning.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

We continued to have an active volunteer programme with many volunteers supporting virtual events for individuals at home to ensure that connections were kept alive. There were many fun sessions and classes held over Zoom but there is nothing like the real thing and we are delighted that we have returned to in-person events in the last couple of months. The Best Buddies College Committees remained committed to the programme and an update on this is provided on page 39. The Chief Executive offered her sincere thanks to all the volunteers for their commitment and dedication to the children and adults we support.

### **ADVOCACY COUNCIL**

The Advocacy Council continued to meet in 2021, albeit in a virtual environment. The Senior Management Team and Chief Executive met with council representatives to discuss challenges, new proposals and ideas. The Chief Executive thanked the newly appointed Chairperson, Stephen Joyce as well as council members for their continued work in promoting choice for individuals availing of our services. She also thanked the Advocacy Council Facilitators, John Howard and Shane Scanlon, for their commitment to improving the lives of people we support. An update on the Advocacy Council's work is included on page 38 of the Annual Report.

### **OUTLOOK FOR 2022**

This year Ability West is celebrating 60 years of service provision in Galway. In November 1962, a public meeting was held following which a committee was elected with their first objective to fundraise for school accommodation for children with mental handicap, as it was then known. In those early days, significant fundraising was undertaken and grant applications submitted to seek funding to support a new school which opened in 1964 for 12 pupils. The organisation grew from there to its current provision of services to 630 children and adults, in 62 centres across the city and county. It is only fitting that we acknowledge those early

and successive leaders and all who have contributed to the growth and success of the organisation over 60 years and we will mark this special occasion with a number of events during the year. Celebrations were recently held in services to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Huge planning and hard work was undertaken by the frontline teams and people we support. The parties were a great opportunity to get together, have fun and catch up with friends and families. Other events are planned for later in the year and more information will follow on this shortly.

Ability West has a Human Rights Committee and Restrictive Practices Committee and work was undertaken in 2021 with regard to the potential merger of these two committees which is ongoing. The Chief Executive thanked Mr. John O’Dea, former Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee. Mr. O’Dea’s experience, empathy and person-centeredness was vital to the work of this committee. The Chief Executive welcomed the new Chairperson, Dr. Áine Sperrin, who brings a wealth of experience to this role and will guide the merger of both committees in 2022.

This month we will see the commencement of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015 which is a welcome development for people in our services. The act replaces two laws in relation to decision-making capacity that have been in place since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Act establishes a modern legal framework to support decision-making by adults who may have difficulty making decisions without help. It introduces three types of support arrangements for people who currently, or may shortly, face challenges when making certain decisions. It also provides for people who wish to plan ahead for a time in the future when they might lose capacity, by way of an advance healthcare directive, or enduring power of attorney.

We undertook training with senior and middle management in October 2021 and a robust implementation plan has been developed. An information meeting with the Decision Support Service was held virtually in November and it is acknowledged that there will be significant training and support required for people we support, families and staff in relation to this legislation over the coming months and year.

2022 also sees the commencement of a significant five year pilot project. This pilot is borne from collaboration between Ability West and Brothers of Charity Services – West Region with the Proactive Carers Group Galway. It seeks to establish a proactive pathway to residential services for adults with intellectual disability. This is an ambitious project, who with the support of the HSE has been successful in being the only funded pilot project of the HSE National Service Plan 2022. The Chief Executive thanked the Proactive Carers Group Galway, Brothers of Charity Services Ireland – West Region, Cathy McGrath of Disability Federation of Ireland and the HSE for the collaboration to date on this project. Progress on this project will be shared with all over the coming five years.

### **BEREAVEMENTS**

The Chief Executive noted that we were saddened by the passing of four people we support in 2021: Ann Marie Ward, Rita Coyne, Michael Sullivan and Bridget Molloy. Sadly, to February 2022, we have had three further bereavements: Mary B. King, Mary Crehan and Pdraig Kelly. Many people we support, their families, staff, board members and volunteers also experienced bereavements and we extend our deepest sympathies to them. May they all rest in peace.

### **CONCLUSION**

Finally the Chief Executive thanked the Chairman, Kevin Newell, Vice Chairman Sean McGrath, and all Board Members for their continued support and guidance. She acknowledged the children and adults supported by Ability West, their parents, carers, and families for their ongoing co-operation particularly during these past two years which have been difficult for all. The Chief Executive also acknowledged the Directors and Assistant Directors of Client Services, Finance and Human Resources, Department Heads, Managers, Unit Directors, all staff, participants on the Community Employment Scheme, Galway Rural Development’s RSS and TÚS schemes, and all volunteers for their huge contributions to our services in 2021 which continues into 2022. Your commitment and dedication is, as always, very much acknowledged and appreciated.



The Chief Executive also thanked the HSE, in particular Breda Crehan-Roche, Chief Officer, Community Healthcare West; John Fitzmaurice, Head of Disability Services, General Manager, Alma Joyce, Disability Managers, Aoife O'Donohue and Mary O'Donnell, and Head of Finance, Liam Fogarty, and their respective teams who provide ongoing support and assistance to Ability West. She also thanked the local Public Health team who have provided great support to us over the past year in addition to the many statutory, non-statutory and voluntary service providers that we work with for their ongoing co-operation and assistance.

## **5. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2021**

Mr John McHugo, Director of Finance reported that the Financial Statements for the past year were reviewed in advance of their formal adoption as part of the Annual Report and the full Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 are available on our Website ([www.abilitywest.ie](http://www.abilitywest.ie)) where they can be either read or downloaded.

The Financial Statements have been prepared and audited in accordance with FRS 102 "*The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in Ireland*". Additionally, the Directors have elected to have regard to the "*Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities*", which is better known as the "*Charities SORP*" in the preparation of the Financial Statements even though The Charity Regulator has still not finalised the adoption of same.

Mr. McHugo acknowledged the presence of Dermot Callanan from FCC Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors at the meeting and said the ongoing help and assistance provided by FCC is much appreciated.

Mr. McHugo explained that prior to the introduction of "*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 reporting format all income and expenditure, excluding expenditure on *Fixed Assets* is now recorded in "*The Statement of Financial Activities*" (SOFA). This however can be somewhat misleading to a reader of the Financial Statements as the inclusion of Capital Income without the corresponding Expenditure can give the impression that a significant operating surplus has been recorded when in fact this is not the case.

Mr. McHugo then highlighted page 34 and 35 of the Financial Statements where Supplementary Information can be found that provides comprehensive details of both Income and Expenditure analysed under the headings of Revenue and Capital. On page 34 it can be noted that an operating Revenue surplus of €749,283 was recorded for the year. This is an exceptional result which is primarily due to the receipt of unique funding in 2021 under headings such as "*Covid*" and "*Strengthening Disability Services*". Fortunately, we have been able to defer the income received under "*Strengthening Disability Services*" to 2022 when corresponding expenditure can be incurred on a planned basis. The aforementioned surplus is added to our Revenue Reserve and will be utilised to fund various unfunded services and projects during 2022.

Under the heading of Capital, a surplus of €1,234,848 is reported for the year. However, in understanding this surplus, it is important to note that €1,181,473 was received from the Department of Education during the year for building works carried out in St. Oliver's Special School, Tuam. From a Capital perspective, the corresponding Expenditure for the building works carried out in St. Oliver's Special School, Tuam has been charged to Tangible Assets in the Balance Sheet and this is detailed in Note 10 on page 21.

Mr. McHugo referred to the detailed summaries of both Income and Expenditure for 2021 on pages 34 and 35 with comparative figures for 2020. He then highlighted items of specific items of importance from the 2021 Financial Statements as follows:

In "*The Statement of Financial Activities*" on page 10, Income and related Expenditure is recorded under the headings of RESTRICTED and UNRESTRICTED Funds and PENSION Reserve Funds. "*Restricted Funds*" refers 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.

*“Unrestricted Funds”* refers to funds received which are spent or applied at the discretion of the organisation. Fundraising and donations are examples of this, where the funds received are spent on the development of buildings and to purchase of motor vehicles and equipment. The *“Pension Reserve Funds”* refers to the required accounting treatment of our old Defined Benefit Pension Scheme.

The various sources of income are detailed under the heading of *“Unrestricted Funds”*, in particular *“Fundraising and Donations”* income for 2021 amounted to €48,379, compared to €47,994 in 2020. The income received from *“Fundraising and Donations”* in both 2021 and 2020 is significantly less than the preceding years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr. McHugo expressed his gratitude to all those who fundraised or donated during the pandemic. Without this continuing support, we would not be able to continue the development of buildings and to purchase much needed motor vehicles and equipment.

Mr. McHugo advised that Michael Flanagan was appointed as Community Development Officer in early 2022. Michael comes to us with experience of our sector, and we are confident that he will significantly improve our fundraising returns over the coming years.

In addition to Fundraising and Donations, the other income included under the heading of *“Unrestricted Funds”* includes various contributions, interest earned, and other sundry income received during the year. During 2021 Ability West received three very significant bequests, totalling €365,000. We are extremely grateful to the individuals concerned in considering Ability West to be a suitable beneficiary of their estate. The funds received have been allocated to our Capital Funds and will be prudently spent on the development of services.

Also included in *“The Statement of Financial Activities”* (SOFA) is *Income and Expenditure* under the heading of *“Restricted Funds”*. 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 15 on pages 23 to 26 in the Financial Statements.

Mr McHugo then referred to the Balance Sheet on Page 11 of the Financial Statements, where the overall financial position of Ability West is detailed (as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021) with comparison figures for 2020. Total Net Assets amount to €30,883,300 as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021, when compared to €28,574,149 to previous year. The various funds/reserves are detailed on the lower half of the Balance Sheet on this page.

Mr. McHugo highlighted that there is a wealth of financial information contained in the various Notes on pages 14 to 32 and 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. They provide full transparency of the organisation’s financial affairs. Mr. McHugo reiterated that the Financial Statements are available on our website ([www.abilitywest.ie](http://www.abilitywest.ie)) where they can be either read or downloaded.

Mr. McHugo acknowledged the help and support received from Ability West Board of Directors, the Finance Committee (under the Chairmanship of Mr. Dermot O’Neill), the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chief Executive, the Senior Management Team and the various Managers and Unit Directors throughout the organisation. Their help and support in the ongoing management of our finances is much appreciated. Mr. McHugo also wished to thank Breda Crehan-Roche, John Fitzmaurice, Alma Joyce, Mary O’Donnell, Aoife O’Donoghue, Liam Fogarty, Dermot Dawson and Gerry Burke from the HSE for their ongoing support.

Finally, Mr. McHugo thanked his colleagues in the Finance, Administration and Human Resources Departments for their ongoing commitment and hard work.

Mr. Anthony O’Connor proposed and Mr. James McNabb seconded the adoption of the Annual Report and Audited Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

## **6. APPOINTMENT AND REMUNERATION OF AUDITORS**

Mr. Sean McGrath informed the meeting that the organisation's Auditors, FCC Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors, have indicated their willingness to be reappointed and will be deemed to be reappointed in accordance with Section 383(2) of the Companies Act 2014 in the absence of any valid resolution to the contrary. The appointment and remuneration of the auditors was proposed by Mr. Ray Kelly and this was seconded by Mr. Anthony O'Connor.

## **7. RATIFICATION OF FAMILY REPRESENTATIVE NOMINEES**

Mr. Dermot O'Neill, Company Secretary reported that the individuals who have been nominated through the Family Forum election process would normally be ratified at this point in the meeting. However, as per the Company Secretary's letter to members, dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022, it was noted that an election did not take place this year, due to competing demands of the Covid-19 pandemic and workloads associated with same. Mr. O'Neill noted that the Board of Directors also wish to amend the Constitution so that Family Representatives will hold a three year term, as is the case for Co-opted Directors; as opposed to the one year term that they are permitted currently.

Mr. O'Neill stated that the current Family Representatives are Dr. Nikki De Taranto and Mr. James McNabb, who were both nominated at the 2021 AGM. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Mr. O'Neill recommend their ratification until such time a re-election can take place.

Mr. Mick Finnerty proposed and Mrs. Patricia Lawless seconded the ratification of Dr. de Taranto and Mr. McNabb to the Board of Directors.

## **8. ELECTION/RATIFICATION OF DIRECTORS**

Mr. Dermot O'Neill, Company Secretary, reported that the following pertains in relation to the election of Officers in line with our current constitution:

Section 41, subsection (b) of the Articles of Association; In relation to the Officers the following is the position:

- |                                      |                           |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| - Kevin Newell, Chairperson          | available for re-election |
| - Vice Chairperson, Sean McGrath     | available for re-election |
| - Company Secretary, Dermot O'Neill  | available for re-election |
| - Honorary Treasurer, Dermot O'Neill | available for re-election |

Mr. Anthony O'Connor proposed and Mr. Ray Kelly seconded the ratification of the Officers listed.

The Company Secretary informed the meeting that remaining Directors will be co-opted by the elected Directors at the first board meeting following the Annual General Meeting.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Dermot O'Neill proposed a vote of thanks on behalf of the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive and the Executive, to the Chairman, Kevin Newell. He acknowledged and thanked Kevin for his commitment and dedication to Ability West. He noted Kevin's professionalism and he always ensure the business of the Board is fair, equitable and transparent. This vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Dermot O'Neill and seconded by Mr. James McNabb.

There were no questions arising. The Acting Chairperson concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the meeting.