

Draft Minutes of SFS AGM 2024

Date: 28/04/2024

Venue: Wash Bar, 11-13 N Bank St, Edinburgh EH1 2LP and Online

Committee members: Toby Hawks (chair), Laura Valkonen (secretary), Julia Wallin, Tomi Nihtilä, Jean-Loup Rebours-Smith, Markus Ketola, Tatu Åhlberg (online)

Member attendees: Sinikka & Geoff Wyatt, Anja Ketola, Sami Ketola, Markku Väättänen, Riitta & Liam Jackson, Fiona Forrester (online)

Apologies: Harry Nimmo (Honorary Consul of Finland in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen) and Carol Nimmo

1. Welcome and Approval of Minutes from AGM 2023

- TH opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending
- Quorum of 15 reached, so the meeting could proceed
- Minutes of AGM 2023 were unanimously approved by the members present

2. Chair's Report (TH)

2.1. Governance

- Introduction to the new committee, which was formed at last AGM.
- Long easy since then; committee full of enthusiasm and appetite for organising events
- Initially elected secretary stepped down shortly afterwards; grateful to Laura Valkonen for stepping up to the role and doing such a good job over the year
- Matthew Gorrie and Tomi Nihtilä will be officially stepping down from committee roles at this meeting. A big thank you to them, especially for providing continuity from the previous committee.

2.2. Summary of events from past year:

- Juhannus: organised at quite short notice after the committee was formed, but was a great success, with a sauna and BBQ on Portobello beach. We hope to do this again this year.
- International Folk Day in September: Finnish folk music taster was held at St Cecilia's Hall and it was heartwarming to see there was lots of interest in Finland, Finnish, and the kantele.
- Itsenäisyyspäivä: Scottish Finnish Ceilidh at the Edinburgh Ukrainian Club - Scottish ceilidh dances set to Finnish music. This was also well attended and we hope to arrange something similar again this year. Ukrainian Club did a lovely job for us and we hope to keep up the good relationship with them.
- Pub nights: these were started as a forum for regular member meetups, monthly in the Victoria Bar in Leith. Attendance has been variable, so we decided to

pause them at the start of this year, but hope to restart again soon, possibly with a different format, day or venue

- And finally, a small nod to Vappu with some munkkirinkelit and drinks after the AGM.

2.3. Plans for the coming year:

- We are keen to expand roster of events; but we also have to be realistic regarding how much time we have available, both committee and members, so we don't want to overwhelm.
- Priority is member engagement and expansion: no use putting on events if not of interest to membership
- But we would also like to increase visibility of the cultural role of SFS, as an advocate for Finland and Finnish culture, as well as being a home from home for Finns living in Scotland.
- Collaboration with other Nordic societies is one option. We're already in touch with Anglo-Finnish Society, but would like to connect also with the Finnish Embassy in London, and other Scottish-Nordic cultural organisations.
- Any ideas from our members would be gratefully received.

2.4. Finnish language

- LV has details of a Finnish language tutor available on request.
- We tried to start a language cafe (kielikahvila) earlier this year, but there wasn't enough interest at the time. We hope to restart again in autumn.
- Suomi-koulu is currently paused due to low numbers of teachers/students.
- We are keen to support Finnish language provision where possible.

2.5. Finnish Culture

- We are looking to increase our use of Flag Days (liputuspäivät) as a framework for events.
- With 2 musicians on the committee (JW and TH) we are keen to programme more musical events, for example

2.6. Conclusion

- We start the summer positively
- Thanks for committee for an excellent first year
- Bank balance good (see below)

2.7. Things for members to think about:

1. Constitution: Should we update it to reflect current times? This would require an EGM to be called.

2. Financial year: Currently Jan-Dec; should we update it to be in line with AGM (Apr-Mar)?

3. Hon. President/Hon. Vice-president: Stipulated in Constitution, but currently no such positions

- TH will type up the constitution and send it out to members with changes proposed by the committee, and schedule an EGM to vote on this.

3. Treasurer's Report (TÅ)

(N.B. Report delivered by TH, owing to technical issues)

- Accounts are looking healthy.
- We moved bank account earlier this year from Clydesdale (Virgin Money) to Bank of Scotland, who have an excellent online banking service, much more flexible and we can put through transactions more easily. TÅ and TH are both signatories on the account.
- Juhannus and Itsenäisyyspäivä events both made small losses, but these are sustainable from the account balance.
- MK raised a question about possible income/grants from Suomi-seura. MV informed us that funding is possible if it is earmarked for specific events. Suomi-seura membership fee is 155 EUR: is it worth it for us? This is also something to think about. We have not interacted with them much in recent years.
- LV informed the group that, as part of Suomi-seura membership, we are entitled to free Finnish language books (both literature and non-fiction), but they now need to be collected in person from the Suomi-seura offices in Helsinki. LV and TÅ will arrange collection this summer.
- SW remembered that a few years ago it was possible to receive legal advice from Suomi-seura. Benefits of Suomi-seura membership is something for the committee to look into this year.
- Membership: no reminders sent out for some time, so we will be addressing this imminently.

4. Approval of Accounts

- Accounts were unanimously approved by the members present.

5. Approval of existing Committee Members

- Office bearers and Ordinary members demitted office
- Matthew Gorrie (in absentia) and Tomi Nihtilä stood down
- All other committee members were elected for another year

6. Any other Business

- LV has been in touch with Mikko Ramstedt for updates regarding Finnish Expatriate Parliament (ulkosuomalaisparlamentti) and will send out info to members once we have it.

- Website needs to be updated (info is pre-Brexit), so this is another task for the committee this year.

DRAFT