**ACSONI AGM 2022**

**31 August 2022**

***The 2022 AGM took place in the ACSONI office in a hybrid way. Around 15 members plus the ACSONI staff (Omer Osman, Takura Makoni, Mohaddeseh Ziyachi) and trustees (Dr. Livingstone Thompson (Chair), Lori Gatsi-Barnett (Treasurer), Simon Barr, Lillian Vellem) attended the meeting in person and online.***

1. **Introduction and greeting:**

The meeting started with the attendees’ introduction. Then Dr. Livingstone Thompson as the chairman explained the meeting agenda, which was sent to the attendees in advance.

1. **Charmain’s talk**

The meeting was followed up by **Dr. Thompson’s talk**, while hard copies of his talk’s transcripts were distributed amongst the attendees. Dr. Thompson presented the trustees’ report of the ACSONI’s activities during the last year, briefly explaining *The Management Committee, Staff and Volunteers, Finance, Funding and Funders, 20th Anniversary & Coming Year, Membership, and Commendations.*

1. **Attendees’ discussion:**

After the chairman’s report, attendees were invited to ask their questions and state their comments. The main comments and questions were as follows:

* **Financial transparency:** a few of the members asked for a detailed financial report. They required more clarification on the way that obtained funds have been spent.

*These commenters were advised to wait for the business manager’s presentation, which would include, a detailed financial report.*

* **Representativeness and inclusiveness of ACSONI**: A few attendees raised the concern that the AGM does not seem to be representative enough of all African and Caribbean groups and individuals, who live in Northern Ireland. They criticized the invitation process through WhatsApp and the small attendance of the members. They had expected the attendance of a large number of members from various countries and backgrounds in order to reflect on their issues, concerns, and problems. They also suggested that the membership fee should be waived, as it has recently been.

Attendees were also wondering how ACSONI is contributing to the community. They also suggested the inclusion of individuals from different African and Caribbean nationalities on the trustees’ board in order to make it more inclusive and representative. They believed that community members should be able to suggest candidates.

*ACSONI staff and trustees explained that the policy officer has tried his best to invite all community members to the AGM, not only through WhatsApp, but also through email, and all other online platforms such as Instagram. ACSONI staff also informed the attendees of a “community conversation session” that is supposed to be held in October, aiming to reflect on the community’s concerns and issues. Some of the meeting attendees also confirmed that the AGM does not aim at discussing issues faced by the community and that there should be another specific meeting.*

*ACSONI staff and trustees also clarified that for a while, ACSONI was even subjected to the risk of closing due to the lack of funding and employees, and thus now ACSONI is just getting revived. The Trustees’ members also explained that currently, they need individuals with specific knowledge and skills on board, rather than representatives of different countries.*

* **ACSONI organizational status**: some attendees stated that they had assumed that ACSONI is an umbrella organization to supervise and lead other African and Caribbean organizations in Northern Ireland. They compared ACSON to its past and believed ACSONI is not active enough and does not bring all other sub-organizations together. They also expected to see representatives of other organizations at AGM.

*These attendees were advised that ACSONI is not an umbrella organization, but it is one of the African and Caribbean organizations in Northern Ireland. The chairman clarified that in the revised constitution, there is no reference to ACSIONI as an umbrella organization. But ACSONI has four working groups on health, education, culture, and heritage to investigate the community’s needs and issues and to make relevant strategic plans. Besides, ACSONI does not have any specific resources to deliver to the community and does not need to create opportunities. Instead, the keyworker gathers relevant information on all available resources in Northern Ireland and refers community members to those supporting organizations. The policy officer also explained that ACSONI has been meeting with different policy and strategic organizations such as PSNI, Housing Executive, and Home Office to address the community’s issues through making policies and strategies.*

1. **Business manager’s presentation:**

After the above discussion, **Omer Osman,** the business manager, presented his report and clarified ACSONI’s activities in detail during the last year. He specified management activities, financial matters, training, and events of ACSONI from October 2021, when he joined ACSONI to August 2022 in detail. Osman’s talk and hard copies of his report answered many attendees’ questions regarding ACSONI’s contributions and financial spending.

1. **Concluding remark**

The AGM finished with the attendees’ positive votes for the co-option of the current trustees and the summarization of ACSONI’s future plans. As mentioned above, ACSONI will be running a few important programs:

1. To employ a finance officer. The application deadline was postponed to September 15.
2. To secure the core of the trustees’ board with people having the required skills.
3. To arrange an inter-community conversation meeting in October.
4. To organize and conduct the Black History Month events.