

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of Engage...crikey, what a year, but I'm guessing most AGM's will start with a similar statement of disbelief.

Looking back over this last year it is quite remarkable to look at what has happened. None of us could have anticipated what we were about to experience over the coming year and months, as we closed our last conference in Stratford in July 2019.

Our year started with both Rich and I implementing changes, changes to try and place the organisation in a position to increase membership and to function in a more proactive way. In the autumn term, we saw the creation of the advisory committee. A move to retain great experience, whilst allowing those who had served us so well, for a number of years, to step away from the day to day, and still offering their experience and wisdom at time of need. Colleagues on the advisory committee have been able to support to a greater or lesser degree as required and dependent on personal circumstance, yet despite this we are hugely grateful for their on-going commitment and support, and we are hopeful too that they are happy with the way things have developed.

As we moved through the autumn, the launch of the website deadline was missed but we are pleased we took the extra time to get it right and think it is potentially transformative. It looks great, and brings a real vibrancy to the organisation. It enables schools to see for themselves the power of the national awards as well as the creative awards...potentially transformative, because a website is only as good as the signposts towards it and the abundance of regular updates needed... we all need to bring schools in to populate areas, such as the shared resources section, which has the potential to be really useful for members. Georgina's work with Oink appears never ending but the proof of the benefits can be seen in the quality of the website and content she has created. It can't be easy dealing with one busy chair let alone two.

We would like to thank Jon Lees for picking up and driving the appointment of our Administration and Strategic Support Officer (ASSO), Georgina. We were keen to provide Georgina with a role of status and security, and make the strategic aspects of her work and her skills more visible, which we think we have achieved. The commitment to Georgina and the ASSO role, does however, place a responsibility on all of us to recruit more schools and organisations to be paying members...we need a serious increase of our finances to sustain Engage, and the excellent work that Georgina does.

The spring term highlighted the need for engage to be adaptable. The onset of the Covid Crisis raised the issue of the lack of support for Headteachers and leaders. Bringing in new technology to the way we as an organisation work, helped us reach out, and spread the name of Engage to new organisations. Our Engage_and_connect sessions gained a great deal of attraction and personal thanks must go to Sharon for allowing us to exploit her links and connections, with video presentations from Keith Fraser, Chair of The Youth Justice Board. Thanks must also go to our own Bernard Allen, Prof Barry Carpenter, Sharon herself on two occasions, and the never to be forgotten, Richard McCann. The ability through Zoom to reach out to lots of schools is something we need to exploit, to both raise our profile, and to also, increase membership. We have already secured the time and expertise of Carolyn Eyre and Nick Whittaker in the autumn term and look forward to seeing increased connections with members and those on the verge of joining too.

Rich has asked that my links with NASS are acknowledged. Not being invited to the top table with the DFE, at a crucial point, was disappointing but the Link with NASS proved vital in disseminating up to date information to our schools at the height of the crisis. Our partnership with Claire and NASS remains strong.

So, priorities for us as an organisation going forward are clear.

Marketing Georgina and the sub- committee are working on a marketing strategy that will look at various membership types to increase our appeal to differing organisations.

Regional Reps Overhaul of the role of the regional rep is vital. In the time since the role was created, the roles of Heads & Principals has significantly changed, with less and less time for us to get out and network. The fact that we have been without a rep in two key areas of London & the East, for a number of years, is an ongoing concern that we need to focus on.

This is an outstanding organisation, with brilliant people...it continues to support schools, helping to change and transform young people's lives. We need to make sure we are able to continue to do this, in the most challenging of times, by championing and supporting quality Social, Emotional and Mental Health delivery, and outcomes, across our regions, and nationwide too.

Sue and Rich