



Minutes of the Committee meeting held by Zoom on 7 September 2021

Attending: Tessa Cox (in the Chair); Ian Smith; Peter Snelling; Siân Rees; Carol Yirrell; David Roberts (attending by invitation); Julia Dickens; Vanessa Skelton (Minutes Secretary)

Action

1 Apologies and welcome

Tessa Cox welcomed the Committee.

2 Minutes of meeting on 20 May 2021

The minutes were approved. *[NB an alteration of the record of the date of the meeting was subsequently made – it had taken place on 20 May, not the 19th]*

Peter had made contact with Peter Wolfendale, who had volunteered to sing in the wedding on 11 September and was planning to come to the 7 September rehearsal. Carol added that Jenny Harris had been in touch – she was planning to stay away at least for this term, but would pay her sub for the year. She wished, however, to relinquish her role as Website Manager as of the AGM.

[NB Subsequently to this meeting it was reported that Jenny would be happy to stay in her role even though she was not singing for the time being. This news was welcomed by all].

3 Minutes of mini-committee meeting on 13 August 2021

The minutes were approved

Peter had still not heard finally from Woburn Church as to availability for the first 2022/23 concert, although the person holding the weddings diary had said that the 19 November and 3 December were both free. MK Chorale had now informed us they were planning a concert on 19 November, so we should now look at either 12 November or 3 December -the preferable date being 12 November. **Peter** would chase Stephen Nuth and go back to the weddings organiser.

Peter

David proposed that the Programming sub-committee should meet again to discuss forthcoming concerts.

David

Ian confirmed that the costs for the Alina Orchestra for November would be the same as agreed for the cancelled concert.

Tessa still had arrangements for the wedding music on her 'to do' list. There was currently no weddings coordinator – Peter was dealing with requests that came in.

Tessa

4 Charity number/status clarification

The current position is that the CIO is dormant, and has to remain so until NatWest manages to open our new account. Until then, everything must be done in the old charity's name. **Peter** was finding dealing with NatWest Bank

Peter

extremely frustrating but said **he** would follow-up with NatWest when back from his holiday.

5 13 November concert

It was agreed that as things stood at present LFTs would not be required of members of the Choir who had proved their double vaccination status. They should distance as much as possible, and should be asked to wear masks when moving through the church, and, if they were happy, to remove them when singing. They should spend as little time as possible in the crypt, because of the ventilation difficulties there. Ian would, however, like a warm up as this is very beneficial to the choir's performance.

There was discussion of what might work best for the safety of the audience in relation to their seating. It was decided that ticket sales should be limited so that not more than 75% of tickets available in normal times would be sold, on a proportionate basis throughout the ticket bands. (In practical terms this amounts to 300 tickets.) It was agreed that it would simplify the process if, for this concert, all pews were sold as top price tickets and all chairs at the rear as middle price tickets. Peter reminded the committee that it had already been decided that all Friends should be allocated two complimentary tickets.

Linslade School had not yet agreed to the use of their chairs. Other possibilities were the chairs from the crypt or the company we use when performing at the theatre.

It was agreed that ticket sales on the door would be allowed – **Peter** was in the process of finalizing the arrangements for the card reader.

Peter

Elly should be requested to ask for the names of the seat occupiers when selling tickets to choir members.

Peter

If the government's covid safety requirements change, the choir would of course follow the latest guidance.

David kindly offered to draft a revised paragraph on covid precautions for use on connection with ticket sales. People should be requested to use masks when moving in the church, using a phrase such as 'masks are recommended but not compulsory'.

David

Programmes should be produced as usual, and would be free, with a donation box available.

Ian had asked Bethany Seymour and Anna Huntley to take the soloist roles – Bethany had agreed, but Ian was still waiting to hear from Anna. He would let David know as soon as he heard, so that David could finalise the posters and programmes.

Ian

Ian would contact Nick Cutts regarding covid precautions for the orchestra – eg would they require refreshments, would the strings share stands etc.

Ian

Ian would contact Beverley Thompson about contracts.

Ian

The church had not responded to enquiries about their covid precautions, and whether they expected a thorough clean after the concert. **Siân** would ask them again.

Siân

The St John Ambulance team had been booked for the concert. They had requested a separate treatment room. It was agreed that the vestry could be used in such an emergency.

Siân said that there was no need for others to be involved with a risk assessment.

6 Rehearsal arrangements for 8 September

Siân was thanked for (congratulated on) her seated plan. She had also done a list for Test and Trace, and would be on the door with Carol to take the register, and give out masks inserts to anyone who wanted one. There was some discussion about flexibility for membership this term. It was agreed that members should be requested to pay for the whole year, but that Peter would have some discretion in the circumstances. There should also be some flexibility in attendance requirements this term.

7 The store

Peter explained that Robin Dawson had contacted him to say that if we wished to continue to use the store, an agreement with its new owners needed to be formalised. It was agreed that the cost of a commercial store was likely to be quite onerous, let alone the organisation involved, and Peter was asked to contact Robin, and to commence negotiations.

Peter

8 Future scheduled events

- 13 November 2021

This had been discussed earlier on the agenda

- 27 November 2021 – Carols on the Cobbles

We had now been formally invited to sing in Woburn Square on 27 November at 6.30. Better lighting, cover and amplification had all been promised. The event was in aid of the Woburn Heritage Centre, and so it was agreed we would not collect for Willen. It was agreed that we should sing a mixture of carols for the Choir and for audience participation. Word sheets for audience-participation carols should be circulated.

- December 2021 Beds Fire and Rescue Service

The Fire and Rescue Service had at last responded to Ian's contact. However, they had not been able to inform him whether the event was likely to take place as yet, as a new Chief Fire Officer was in place, and he had yet to make the decision.

- December 2021 Carols at the Weathercock

There had been no contact from the Weathercock as yet.

- 18 December 2021 – Christmas Concert

Woburn Church had been booked. Ian would prepare a programme for approval.

Ian

- 2 April 2022 – Bernstein *'Chichester Psalms'*, Lauridsen *'Lux Aeterna'*, Rheinberger *Requiem*

David asked whether the treble had been booked, as he wished to proceed with preparing posters and flyers. Ian would deal with this. Alexander Olleson was

Ian

suggested (a local boy who won 'Chorister of the Year' in 2020) – Paul Dickens was acting as his agent.

- 2 July 2022

M Haydn/FJ Haydn deferred from June 2021

- 22/23 Season

A joint concert with MK Chorale was not being proposed, as the Chorale were proceeding with their jubilee event. **Ian** would have an informal discussion with the Bedford Choral Society's Treasurer to see if they might be interested in a joint concert after the success of the last one. Peter felt that we could not bear the whole financial burden of such an event.

Ian

A decision on whether we should put on Carol Concerts annually or continue with the biennial pattern was deferred for the time being.

9 Treasurer's report

Peter had circulated the latest version of the management accounts. The income from Gift Aid was not shown as yet, but Peter was anticipating a surplus of around £32.

The 21/22 budget would normally have been prepared for the committee's approval by now, but Peter had been waiting for the decision about audience numbers. Now it had been taken he would proceed with finalising the budget. **Ian** confirmed that fees for Holly Lowe, the harpist, had been agreed at £250. Peter was also awaiting confirmation of the orchestral fees for the March/April 2022 concert, the June 2022 concert and soloist fees. Peter would assume that audience numbers would revert to normal for future concerts. However, he warned that income would almost certainly be lower than normal due to lower membership numbers.

Ian

Peter also reported that he had spotted a worrying mistake in the most recent bank statement from NatWest. Two unauthorised DDs had been made, each of £24.50. Such a mistake would be of extreme concern in any account, but in an account which required two signatories and did not operate electronically a large degree of reckless carelessness on the part of the bank seemed the only explanation. Peter had been to the bank branch, who had accepted that the debits were unauthorised, cancelled the mandate and refunded the money immediately. **Peter** would of course keep a weather eye on the statement to ensure no repetition of such an error.

10 Publicity officer

Tessa reported that Sheila had said she was happy to work with a successor until the concert, but that she had not as yet done anything to advertise for the successor. She would ask for a volunteer at the rehearsal on the 8th.

Tessa

11 Membership Recruitment

Recruitment remained on **Tessa's** 'to do' list.

Tessa

David said that just before lockdown he had printed some new recruitment posters. He would bring them to the first rehearsal.

David

Siân reported that Making Music were running a course on recruitment by webinar on 23 September.

12 Future Meeting dates

These were confirmed as 6 October (AGM), 9 November 2021 and 11 January 2022. The AGM would need to be advertised to the choir 2 weeks previously (ie by 22 September).

13 Any other business

- Ian asked if anyone had expressed a preference for rehearsing by zoom. Peter said that no-one had mentioned this in their responses to his request for proof of vaccinations.
- Vanessa said that it was possible that the OU Choir might use the Village Hall for a temporary rehearsal space and they had asked if they could borrow the piano in this event. David said that one of the conditions of us being able to keep the piano there was that we should allow other groups to use it.
- Vanessa reminded the committee that Peter Skelton would be unable to get good excess cover when hiring the van due to his having reached the 70-years old threshold.
- Siân reported that St John Ambulance had not as yet responded to the request for help at the Carol Concert. **Tessa** would ask if any members of the Choir were first aiders – Ian said that by the time of the concert his first aid status would be reconfirmed. *[NB Since the date of the meeting, St John Ambulance had confirmed their attendance]*
- As Sheila Edwards will be stepping down from the post of Publicity Officer we actively need to recruit someone to take on this role to ensure that we meet the press deadlines to advertise our November 2021 concert.
- Sheila Edwards had said she believed the Choir's Equality and Diversity policy needs revisiting, and had made several recommendations. Ian said he had a precedent he believed might be useful. The Policy subcommittee would meet to consider the matter.
- Peter reported that there was a need for more singers at the funeral on 21 September, particularly men.
- Sad news had recently been received – Carolyn Howell's husband had recently died. **Carol** would send flowers.

Tessa

Tessa

Siân
Jeremy

Carol