



Minutes of the 47th Annual General Meeting of the Choir (Charity numbered 1188026) held at 9.00 pm on Wednesday 11th October 2023.

In the Chair: Tessa Cox

1 Apologies for absence

Barbara Titchmarsh; Iain Stubbs; David Pilgrim; Carolyn Howell; Jenni Ferrans; Jan Liddie; Gerrylynn Roberts, David Roberts; Ellie Pettigrew; Julia Dickens.

2 Opening remarks from the Chair

Tessa Cox welcomed all those attending and, for the sake of new members, introduced herself and those Choir officials sitting at and near the table – Peter Snelling: Treasurer, Vanessa Skelton: Minutes Secretary and Siân Rees: Secretary.

3 Minutes of the 46th AGM and matters arising

3.1 The draft minutes of the last AGM had been made available to all members.

3.2 The Chair asked if there were any questions relating to the minutes or any queries on their accuracy, and if there were any matters arising. Nothing was raised. Keith Attenborough proposed that the minutes should be accepted as a true record of the 46th AGM, with Lynne Bennett seconding. There were no objections and the minutes were accepted.

4 Chair and Trustees' Report

4.1 The Chair had prepared a formal Trustees' report, from which she read. This is attached as an addendum to these minutes. She informed the meeting that the report would be submitted to the Charity Commission together with the accounts.

4.2 The Chair then said that she wished to personally thank both the Musical Director, Ian Smith and the choir's accompanist, Tim Grant-Jones, for their contribution to the Choir, noting their outstanding hard work and good humour which resulted in the Choir's activities being so successful. The Choir responded with a warm round of applause. She also wished to sincerely thank the many people who helped with choir activities on a day-to-day basis, whose names were listed on the formal Notice of the AGM. However, more help is needed. There are always tasks that need doing for the Choir, and all volunteers are welcome and much appreciated.

5 Treasurer's Report

5.1 The Treasurer had circulated the accounts by email, and copies were also available at the meeting. The Treasurer reminded members of the dire straits that we were facing last year, with a deficit of some £7,000 for the year 21/22 and a projected deficit of £9,000 for 22/23. As a consequence, subs had been increased radically (to £195), and changes to the programme for 22/23 had been implemented, with the result that the deficit for the year had come in at £3,210.29, a considerable improvement. One unforeseen drop in income had been much to blame for this – a complete lack of bookings for weddings during the entire year. The Treasurer had found out that only four weddings had taken place at St Mary's in Woburn during the year, and none of these had wanted a choir. He hoped that once the Sculpture Gallery in the Abbey

reopened, bookings might come from this source again. In response to suggestions of other churches, he confirmed that churches in the area were aware we were available for hire, but it seemed that many weddings, even when taking place in a church, use recorded music. Funerals were also a small source of income, but as usually only hymns were sung, the fees we could charge were low

- 5.2 The Treasurer also reminded members that we now had to pay over £2,000 annually for rent for storage – this had been free until two years ago. Membership numbers had not fully recovered after Covid, and ticket sales had been lower than expected. It was essential, if the Choir was to keep going, to increase membership numbers and to sell more tickets.
- 5.3 Members put forward various ideas that they felt might help alleviate the situation. Verity Currall suggested raising money by selling refreshments at concerts – the Treasurer pointed out that the amount of work involved in this would make it hard to accomplish; Margot Male suggested holding a social event for which tickets were sold – the Treasurer said that a dinner was being arranged for the 50th anniversary of the choir, and there was to be a garden party in the summer of 2025.
- 5.4 Euan Henderson asked what progress had been made on the idea of collaboration with schools, as both a resource saving measure and a way of introducing more members and selling more tickets. The Chair responded that this was an idea she was pursuing with the 2024 Christmas concert in mind. She reminded the choir of the recent collaboration with Redborne School when some members had sung at a concert of theirs – it was hoped that this would bring benefits and that the collaboration might continue. Lizzie Bancroft suggested an approach to the MK Youth choir – sadly the *Dream of Gerontius* that had been planned with the Youth Choir had had to be cancelled during the Covid years. Penny Miller raised the need for choosing the right work if a school was to be involved – the Messiah was a good example. The Musical Director said that this was the work planned for the November 2004 concert, and we were hoping to work with a school in the Christmas 2024 concert. It was noted that very few children sang in school choirs these days. Rich Mandal said that there were over 1300 students in his school but only 20 sang in the choir. He suggested that an approach could be made to schools suggesting that a group of students might attend a concert – many of his fellow students took music, and played instruments, but most had never heard a live choir. He said that the *St John Passion* would be an excellent opportunity, as Bach was a composer whom the students knew about. It was agreed that informing local schools of our programme could be beneficial in many ways.
- 5.5 The various ideas, including that of a suggested weekly raffle, would be discussed by the committee. The Chair reported that there were ongoing discussions to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the Friends programme.
- 5.6 The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Gillian Bartram and seconded by Barbara Zimmer. There being no dissent, the accounts were formally accepted.

6 Election of officers and committee members

- 6.1 Sadly, no-one had responded to the request for a member to replace Tessa as Chair. A final request was made for nominations, pointing out that the term could be for less than five years. However, no one was proposed. It was suggested that for the immediate future, the Treasurer and Secretary should take on the duties between them, while further efforts were made to find a willing candidate. To the relief of all, Siân Rees and Peter Snelling agreed to this.
- 6.2 The Chair asked Siân if she was willing to act as Secretary for the following year. Siân confirmed she was. Jenny Harris proposed her, with Carol Yirrell seconding. She was unanimously elected.

- 7.3 Peter Snelling confirmed he was willing to stand again for the post of Treasurer. Beverley Thompson proposed him, with Gillian Bartram seconding. There being no objections, he was elected, for, as he pointed out, his 48th year.
- 7.4 The Chair explained that the committee was not at full strength. She was pleased to note that David Roberts and Imogen Allen had expressed their willingness to stand once again, and also that Nick Wood had agreed to join, if elected. Julia Dickens had come to the end of her three year term, but was willing to be coopted. She asked whether any other members were willing to join the committee. No-one came forward. She asked people to think over the matter, and not to hesitate to approach a member of the committee if they felt they could put themselves forward. Peter Snelling proposed that Nick, David and Imogen should be accepted as elected members en-bloc. Judy Barker seconded this. The proposal was accepted without opposition. David Roberts, Imogen Allen and Nick Wood were thus duly elected as members of the committee

7 Subscriptions for 2023-2024 season

- 7.1 The Treasurer said that he did not feel it was right to dramatically increase the subs payable this year after the large increase in 2022-2023, even though inflation was exceptionally high at the moment. He confirmed that his proposal for the new subscription was £200 per annum. He added that there were opportunities for members who felt they could contribute more to join the Friends Programme – some members already most generously gave more to this than they paid by way of subscription.
- 7.2 He explained that even with this increase and the plans for reducing concert costs (using a brass band and a small group rather than a full orchestra for two concerts this season), his budget showed a deficit of £1200 for the year. To maintain the deficit at this ‘lower’ level, it was crucial that we recruit new members (who would bring the benefit of increased ticket sales as well as their subscriptions) and increase ticket sales.
- 7.3 The Treasurer moved acceptance of the proposal and Vanessa Skelton seconded. There was no opposition, and so the new subscription level of £200 was agreed.
- 7.4 The Chair noted that if any member should find they were in financial difficulties regarding payment of the subscription, they should approach the Treasurer in confidence – she sincerely hoped that no one would be prevented from singing due to such difficulties.

8 Any other business

- 8.1 Beverley Thompson proposed thanks to Tessa for her excellent chairing, and, to much applause, she was presented with flowers, wine and a card by the Secretary, who pointed out many of Tessa’s excellent qualities as Chair, including her unflappability, her wonderful sense of humour and her commitment.



Addendum

Year ended 31 August 2023

Danesborough Chorus

Charity Number 1188026

Trustees' Annual Report Year ended 31 August 2023

Activities during the year

After four years of interrupted rehearsals and performances we made it through this season with a full complement of concerts.

We performed on four occasions. In November 2022 we performed Cherubini's *Requiem* and Fauré's *Requiem* and *Cantique de Jean Racine*. Our Christmas concert was performed in Hockliffe Street Baptist Church which proved to be a good venue. In March 2023 we sang *Stabat Mater* by Dvorak and for our Summer concert in June 2023 we achieved a partial standing ovation with our performance of Purcell's *My Heart is Indicting* and Puccini's *Messa di Gloria* which was wonderfully uplifting. Unfortunately, ticket sales were, again, lower than usual, even though the weather for the interval picnic was ideal.

In addition to our own concerts Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service invited us to perform at their Christingle Service and to support their congregational carol singing. We also sang at the Carols on the Cobbles Christmas light switch-on in Woburn and provided some additional voices to Redborne School choir in their Community Concert.

Day-to-day running

We are fortunate to have many members who assist in our day-to-day operation. Without these helpers, concerts would not run as smoothly as they do and the fun of belonging to the choir would be considerably reduced. Having many members performing these various functions means that no-one has to be overcommitted. As with all these tasks, we do need to have new members joining the band of helpers as some inevitably do retire, and so we appeal to those among you, whatever your skills, to see if you can assist in some small way.

As a committee we have met four times in the past year. Danesborough Chorus continues to face financial challenges and these are influencing programming decisions heavily. We find ourselves looking at programming more popular classics, to try and increase tickets sales, and looking for pieces with reduced orchestration or alternative accompaniment to keep costs low in this area.

We are also finding that our membership levels have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. We are operating below our optimal membership of 100 and are finding recruitment difficult. This impacts on income from membership fees (and associated Gift Aid) and ticket sales as members tend to sell to family and friends.

Administrative Information

Danesborough Chorus is constituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and was registered in February 2020. Its objects, set out in the constitution, are to educate the public in the arts and sciences and in particular the art and science of Music. The address for communications is 3 Ackroyd Place, Shenley Lodge, Milton Keynes, MK5 7PA.

The Trustees who have served during the year are: Tessa Cox (Chair); Peter Snelling (Treasurer); Ian Smith (Musical Director); Siân Rees (Secretary); Julia Dickens; Imogen Allen and David Roberts.

The Trustees are elected at the charity's AGM with a further two places being available for co-option of members by the committee. No members came forward to fill these places this year so they became vacant.

Ordinary members of the committee can only serve for a maximum continuous period of three years.

Finance

The annual accounts are attached to this report.

Draft