



**Minutes of the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Charity numbered 279281 held at 8.45 pm on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021.**

In the Chair: Tessa Cox.

**1 Apologies for absence**

Pauline Naylor; Kate Atalay; Miriam Rose; Molly Fitzgerald; Jenny Harris; Clifford Stark; Sheila Edwards; Carol Yirrell; Imogen Allen; James Allen; Judy Barker; Les White.

**2 Opening remarks from the Chair**

2.1 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.

2.2 She explained that although the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation had now been set up following the last AGM, it had, most frustratingly, still not been possible to transfer the choir's funds from the old charity, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant bank inefficiency and delays. The Treasurer had put in much hard work trying to get the matter progressed, and had at last been informed by the bank that the application was now again underway.

**3 Minutes of the 44th 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. The Chair asked if there were any objections. None being forthcoming, the minutes were accepted as correct.

**4 Chair and Trustees' Report**

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 along with the accounts.

**5 Treasurer's Report**

5.1 The Treasurer had circulated the accounts by email, and copies were also available at the meeting. He pointed out the highlights and the reasons behind these, explaining that the large surplus from the previous year was down to the fact that no concerts had taken place. The income from 2021 was considerably lower, largely because subs had been reduced to take account of the fallow year. This of course had a 'reducing' effect on the gift aid income. Donations from Friends were also down, as was wedding income and income from other activities. He was hopeful that the position might revert to normal in the 21/22 year – for example a wedding booking had already been made. The 20/21 year had ended up with a small loss of £102.61.

5.2 Euan Henderson asked what proportion of the subs should be regarded as for training purposes last year in relation to the Gift Aid scheme – the Treasurer said that in the circumstances of zoom rehearsals, the whole sub should be regarded as 'gift-aidable'.

- 5.3 The Treasurer noted that Eric Benton, who had managed the gift-aid scheme for many years, had asked for a replacement to take over from him.
- 5.4 Julia Dickens proposed acceptance of the accounts, and Lynne Bennett seconded this. The Chair asked those in favour to raise their hands – there being a clear majority in favour the accounts were accepted.

## **6 Election of officers and committee members**

- 6.1 The Chair said that she was willing to stand again as Chair for the coming year, and asked if anyone wished to take over. No-one else coming forward, Margot Male proposed her for the position, with Barbara Zimmer seconding. Following a show of hands Tessa Cox was duly elected as Chair for the following year.
- 6.2 The Chair asked Siân Rees if she was willing to act as secretary for the following year, adding what a superb job she did. Siân confirmed she was. Stuart Freake proposed her, with Lizzy Bancroft seconding. The Chair asked those in favour to raise their hands – there being a clear majority in favour, Siân was elected.
- 6.3 Peter Snelling confirmed he was willing to stand again for the post of Treasurer – for the 45<sup>th</sup> year! Peter Skelton proposed him, with Ralph Mazzone seconding. Following a show of hands, Peter was elected.
- 6.4 The Chair explained that no member of the Committee had come to the end of their 3-year term this year. She asked whether the current elected members, Julia Dickens and Jeremy Hopkinson, were happy to continue. Both replied in the affirmative. She explained that she had already asked Carol Yirrell, who had also confirmed her willingness. She was pleased to note that David Roberts had expressed his willingness to stand once again, and that Imogen Allen had also put herself forward for the first time. She proposed that Julia, Carol and Jeremy should be accepted as elected members and David and Imogen be co-opted – all en-bloc. Siân Rees seconded this. The Chair asked those in favour to raise their hands – there being a clear majority in favour the proposal was accepted. Jeremy Hopkinson, Julia Dickens and Carol Yirrell were thus duly elected as members of the Committee and David Roberts and Imogen Allen were co-opted.

## **7 Subscriptions for 2020-2021 season**

- 7.1 The Treasurer reported that the budget for the forthcoming year was late in being approved by the Trustees as there were a few quotes that had not been received in time for the last committee meeting, due to the situation with concerts etc having changed so frequently. However, it was now finalised, although some of it was necessarily speculative – for example it was impossible to predict ticket sales with confidence – would our audiences be happy to return to concert-going as yet? It was also not known whether more members would return to singing and pay their subs – although he noted that some members who had said they were not as yet ready to return to face-to-face rehearsals had paid their subs and said they hoped to return in the future.
- 7.2 The prepared budget showed a deficit of about £6000, which the Treasurer felt to be a reasonable place to be at this stage. He proposed keeping the subscription level at the 2019/20 level, ie £155. He also proposed that the small reduction for couples should be removed – there was, in these days of email, no saving to be made by only sending one set of papers to a household.
- 7.3 The Treasurer moved acceptance of the proposal and Keith Attenborough seconded. Following a show of hands, the proposal was accepted.

The Chair noted that if any member should find they were in financial difficulties regarding payment of the sub, they should approach her or the Treasurer in confidence – it was to be hoped that no one should be prevented from singing due to such difficulties.

- 7.4 The Treasurer reminded members that they could pay by cheque or by bank transfer – the bank details were on the members' section of the website.

## **8 Any other business**

- 8.1 The Treasurer spoke about the financial benefits for the Choir of our singing for weddings, and encouraged more members to offer their services.

- 8.2 Woburn Village Christmas Lights were to be switched on at 6.30 on 27 November – they had asked us to sing at the ceremony, and promised that the lights they provided for us would be more robust than last time!

- 8.3 Euan Henderson noted how enjoyable our joint endeavours with other choirs, using MK Theatre, had been in the past, and asked if the Committee were considering a return to these. The Chair explained that there had been contact with the Chair of MK Chorale throughout the lockdown period, and that the Chorale were still hoping to put on *Dream of Gerontius* at some point in the future – probably not until at least 2023, however. We would certainly consider joining them for this. She added that the Chorale were putting on a concert for the Queen's Jubilee on 5 June 2022 at the Theatre. They had approached us to ask if we would wish to join them. After careful consideration the Committee had decided that we would not accept the offer as a Choir, in the belief that many members might want to join in community events such as Street parties – after such a break in community activity it was felt that people might well wish to prioritise their local communities over a Choir event. However, individual members may wish to join the Chorale – more information about this would be forthcoming shortly. The possibility of another concert with Bedford Choral Society was also being contemplated.

Euan said how pleased he was to hear that there was a possibility of further joint concerts in the future.

- 8.4 Ian asked the Choir to join him in thanking the members of the Committee for their exceptional hard work and commitment over the period of the lockdown. He also wished to thank Tim Grant-Jones for his help and hard work in connection with the Zoom rehearsals. – a round of applause followed, indicating the Choir's appreciation.

- 8.5 The Chair expressed her appreciation of Ian's hard work, dedication and enthusiasm during the difficult days of the lockdown. She said that the results, when we finally had a short opportunity to sing together on an evening in June, had really shown the value of the work Ian had done. Enthusiastic applause confirmed the Choir's appreciation of our Musical Director.

## **Addendum**

Charity Number 279281

# **Trustees' Annual Report Year ended 31 August 2021**

### **Activities during the year**

The 2020/21 season continued to be challenging as the Covid-19 global pandemic continued.

Government restrictions, especially relating to amateur choral singing, which was perceived to be a high-risk activity for transmission of the virus, were stringent.

Ever hopeful of an improvement in the situation we continued to schedule concerts which were, one by one, cancelled, as Government restrictions continued.

We were unable to rehearse indoors for the entire year. We continued to rehearse on Zoom ably led by Ian with accompaniment from Tim, and with several choir members leading sectional breakouts. Following on from the successful vocal workshops organised by Bedford Choral Society in July 2020, Rachel Nicholls led a further workshop for Danesborough in November.

A brief relaxation in the rules meant we were able to sing carols, outdoors and socially distanced, at the Weathercock Inn in December 2020 and that was very well received by their patrons.

The efficacy of Zoom rehearsals was proven when we were, at last, able to rehearse outside in preparation for Jonny and Sarah's rescheduled wedding. On a beautiful evening in June we sang pieces which had only previously been rehearsed on Zoom and compliments were received from several neighbours! Unfortunately the restrictions on weddings persisted and only a small choir of six was permitted to perform at Jonny and Sarah's wedding in July.

(With the widespread availability of vaccinations and testing we were able to resume rehearsing face to face in September 2021.)

### **Day-to-day running**

The Committee, which normally meets on just four occasions during the year, met multiple times as we attempted to interpret the latest guidelines and plan for the future. Special thanks to Julia, our librarian, for managing the shifting timelines for music hire and Sian, our secretary, for combing through the Government guidance and producing many risk assessments.

Even though we have not staged any concerts this year there are many who have still held coordinating roles within the choir and enabled the smooth running of the choir and communication with our sponsors and Friends. (These are listed on the first page of the notification of this evening's meeting.) Thank you to all who already help in this way.

Sheila Edwards is stepping down from being Publicity Officer after seven years and we are also in need of a new Occasions coordinator to relieve Peter of this temporary role.

The Programming Sub-Committee and Communications Sub-Committee have met less frequently this year as we have largely been rescheduling concerts which were already fully planned. We have programmes planned through to July 2022.

### **Administrative Information**

The Danesborough Chorus is constituted as an unincorporated association. 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. It achieves this by presenting concerts and some other activities in the Milton Keynes area as described earlier in this report. The address for communications is 26 Melfort Drive, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 2XN.

The trustees who have served during the year are: Tessa Cox (Chair); Peter Snelling (Treasurer); Ian Smith (Musical Director); Siân Rees (Secretary); Julia Dickens, Jeremy Hopkinson and Carol Yirrell.

The trustees are elected at the charity's AGM with a further two places being available for co-option of members by the Committee. Ordinary members of the Committee can only serve for a maximum continuous period of three years.

It was our desire that the new CIO (Danesborough Chorus, registered number 1188026) which was registered in February 2020 should have been in operation by now but continuing difficulties in opening a new bank account, compounded by the Covid pandemic, have left us with no option other than to keep it dormant at the moment. We are, however, having to file annual returns and an abbreviated Trustees report.

### **Finance**

The annual accounts are attached to this report.

The choir has reserves which are necessary for the performance of concerts which have to be financed before the concerts take place. Reserves considered necessary need to be sufficient to cover the average costs of a season's concerts. Concerts generally run at a loss which is covered by members' subscriptions and other revenues but we cannot put on a concert without having adequate reserves to cover the costs of performances.

We made a very small loss of around £100 in the year under review. We had no income from weddings or sponsorship and a much reduced income from subscriptions but still had some costs for rehearsal fees. We also elected to pay Aspley Guise Village Hall a retainer. Our reserves now stand at close to £38,000.