



**Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting of Charity numbered 1188026 held at 9.00 pm on Wednesday 5 October 2022.**

In the Chair: Tessa Cox.

**1 Apologies for absence**

Pauline Naylor; Molly Fitzgerald; Imogen Allen; Jeremy Hopkinson; Karen Collcott; Ian Collcott; Anne Gray; Iain Stubbs; June Lockley; Margot Male; Sharon Cashman; Rebekah Howe.

**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 45th 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. Carol Yirrell proposed that the minutes should be accepted as a true record of the 45<sup>th</sup> AGM of the old charity, with Sally Johnston seconding. There were no objections and the minutes were accepted.

**4 Minutes of the EGM held in February 2022 and matters arising**

The Chair reminded members that there had been an Extraordinary General Meeting in February, the purpose of which had been to formally approve the dissolution of The Danesborough Chorus Unincorporated Charity (charity number 279281) and the transfer of its funds to the new Charity Danesborough Chorus Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) (charity number 1188026), once permission for the transfer had been given by The Charity Commission. The minutes of this meeting having been previously circulated, Jenny Harris proposed that the minutes should be accepted as a true record, with Euan Henderson seconding. There were no objections and the minutes were accepted.

**5 Chair and Trustees' Report**

5.1 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.

5.2 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 and such fun. The Choir responded with a warm round of applause.

**6 Treasurer's Report**

6.1 The Treasurer had circulated the accounts by email, and copies were also available at the meeting. The Treasurer noted that some 10 years ago he had spoken about the level of the Choir's reserves,

then standing at some £23,000, and pointed out that one unfortunate occurrence could result in a large hole in our 'cushion'. Over subsequent years, the reserves had risen – but last year, due to multiple 'unfortunate occurrences', there was a resultant loss for the year of over £7000. Whilst we still had reserves of over £29,000, repeated losses of this scale would, of course, see the demise of the choir in three years' time.

6.2 The deficit we were facing was without doubt the worst ever, and was due to several circumstances:

- Membership was down following the difficult Covid years, resulting in a loss both of subscriptions and gift aid.
- Tickets sales were down – there were several reasons – fewer members selling tickets; a reluctance to go out following covid; audience members catching up with holidays following Covid; and an aging 'clientele'.
- Wedding bookings were down – this appears to be a general trend, Woburn Church having had only two bookings this year.
- Income from advertising in our programmes was becoming more difficult to procure.

Less Easyfundraising money had been raised by choir members.

6.3 The situation had been discussed in detail at a committee meeting in the summer, and various measures to alleviate the situation had been agreed, ie to raise the subscription level, and to relook at the programming that had been proposed for the year, with a view to lowering costs, together with other minor proposals. The discussion had been summarised and the decisions had been explained in detail in an email sent to all members.

6.4 The Chair asked if there were any questions from members about the accounts. Alison Heywood asked why the costs of hiring the van for setting up the concerts were so high. The Treasurer explained that the operation took from the Friday afternoon, when chairs were collected from a school in Leighton Buzzard until early on the Monday morning when they were returned. He also mentioned that as of this year we were paying rent for the storage of the Choir's staging and scores, following a lengthy period when a former member had kindly let us use the facility for free. We had paid about £1500 for part of the year, but the rent for a full year would be £2300.

There being no further questions, the Chair proposed acceptance of the accounts, with David Roberts seconding. The accounts were approved unanimously.

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

7.1 The Chair said that she was willing to stand again as Chair for the coming year, although this would be her final year. No-one else came forward, and Peter Snelling proposed her for the position, with Jenny Harris seconding. Following a show of hands Tessa Cox was duly elected as Chair for the following year.

7.2 The Chair asked Siân Rees if she was willing to act as secretary for the following year. Siân confirmed she was. Steve Rogers proposed her, with Carol Yirell seconding. The Chair asked those in favour to raise their hands – there being a clear majority in favour, Siân was elected.

7.3 Peter Snelling confirmed he was willing to stand again for the post of Treasurer. Vanessa Skelton proposed him, with Keith Attenborough seconding. Following a show of hands, Peter was elected.

7.4 The Chair explained that there were gaps in the Committee, Jeremy Hopkinson having come to the end of his 3-year term this year, and Carol Yirell having resigned after several years of valiant service as our Membership Secretary. She explained that Imogen Allen had agreed to stand as a full member of the committee, rather than a co-optee. She was pleased to note that David Roberts and Julia Dickens had expressed their willingness to stand once again. She asked whether any other

members were willing to join the committee. As 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 Julia, David and Imogen should be accepted as elected members en-bloc. The Chair seconded this. The Chair asked those in favour to raise their hands – there being a clear majority in favour the proposal was accepted. David Roberts, Julia Dickens and Imogen Allen were thus duly elected as members of the Committee leaving the ‘co-opted’ positions empty for the time being.

## **8 Subscriptions for 2022-2023 season**

- 8.1 The Treasurer confirmed that his proposal for the new subscription was £195 per annum, reiterating that despite the committee’s proposals to reduce concert costs, in order to slow down the Choir in its ‘pathway to oblivion’ it would be necessary to set subscriptions at this level, which he felt was still good value for members – it amounted to less than £4 for each opportunity members had to sing. He added that even such an increase would not completely eradicate future deficits – sadly a deficit had been budgeted for this season. In this context he added that any ideas for increasing income or reducing costs would be very welcome. Ralph Mazzone had already offered to let his church at Newport Pagnell know that we were willing to sing at weddings.
- 8.2 Peter believed we should still try to put on two concerts a year with a professional orchestra; to do so was good both from the Choir and the audience point of view, and further it was difficult to find suitable repertoire without a full orchestra. Alina, whom we had now used for several concerts, played to a very high standard – to use an amateur orchestra was problematical in several ways.
- 8.3 He reiterated the need for new members and noted that more ticket sales would flow from this. 2024/25 would be the choir’s 50th anniversary, and, he said, with everyone’s help we should still be here. He thanked the many members who had already paid their subs at the increased rate.
- 8.4 Fran Lawless asked whether a solution would be to set subscriptions even higher, noting the difficulty that some people had in selling tickets. The Treasurer said he would be reluctant to do this, as he did not want to put off those who struggled to pay in these times when costs were rising universally. He added that for those who were finding it difficult he was happy to accept payment on a termly basis, providing there was a commitment to keep up payments for the full year.
- 8.5 The Chair said that more work needed to be done on social media – an effective use of this should improve both membership and ticket sales. She was doing her best to effect this now she had obtained access to the FB site. The Treasurer added that 1000 recruitment leaflets had been printed last year, and he and Siân had delivered them throughout large areas of Leighton Buzzard without, sadly, an appreciable result.
- 8.6 Euan Henderson asked if forming a relationship with the music departments at any local schools might be effective. The Chair said that she knew from her own experience with a daughter who had sung in the MK Youth Choir, that they struggled with recruitment themselves. Siân Rees noted that Jonny Price, who was Head of Music at Redborne School, had suggested a partnership with the Choir for Redborne’s performance of the Vivaldi Gloria in March 2023. It was hoped that some members might sing at the performance, and this might be a chance to recruit from the children and parents at Redborne. We would also be able to publicise our Spring concert in their programme.
- 8.7 Julia Dickens suggested a partnership to put on joint concerts with local schools might be effective, with both parties performing separate pieces - giving the children a chance to learn about our types of music and us to learn about theirs, whilst increasing ticket sales. Hannah Dixon suggested we should contact Inspiring Music, an organisation set up to assist music making in Central Bedfordshire.

- 8.8 Alison Heywood asked if we advertised at the Stables. There was a discussion on advertising, with local newsletters such as Be Local in Leighton Buzzard mentioned. The Chair said that whilst these matters should be pursued in a more coordinated fashion, unfortunately there had been no response to the frequent requests she had made for someone to take over the role of publicity officer, and therefore whilst the committee and other volunteers did what they could, it was not perhaps as effective as it might be.
- 8.9 The Chair asked for any further ideas people had to promote recruitment and/or ticket sales to be given to the committee, and assured members that all matters raised tonight would be discussed.
- 8.10 The Treasurer moved acceptance of the proposal and Lynne Bennett seconded. Following a show of hands, the new subscription level of £195 was agreed.
- 8.11 The Chair noted that if any member should find they were in financial difficulties regarding payment of the subscription, they should approach her or the Treasurer in confidence – she sincerely hoped that no one would be prevented from singing due to such difficulties.

## **9 Any other business**

- 9.1 Carol Yirrell reminded members that a new Membership secretary was needed.
- 9.2 The Treasurer asked members to ensure they had returned their Gift Aid forms. There were some 20 still outstanding – until all were collected it would not be possible to collect the gift aid for last year. He also asked that members ticked the 'concert' column in the register to indicate whether they intended singing at the next concert.

## Addendum

### Danesborough Chorus

Charity Number 1188026

## Trustees' Annual Report Year ended 31 August 2022

### Activities during the year

Compared to the two previous years the 2021/22 season was altogether more satisfying and far less affected by Covid.

We were able to return to indoor rehearsals in September 2021 and to performing publicly in November 2021 although all our concerts this season have had a reduced capacity of 75% to increase audience distancing.

Our first concert since the pandemic was Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Magnificat* and McDowall's *Ave Maris Stella*, a programme which had been delayed since March 2020. This was very well received with positive comments from the audience.

Unfortunately the Christmas concert had to be cancelled due to the emergence of the Covid Omicron variant and nervousness from both choir and audience about the self-isolation rules and how that would affect Christmas social arrangements.

In April 2021 we performed Bernstein *Chichester Psalms*, Lauridsen *Lux Aeterna* and Rheinberger's *Requiem*. We also sang a Prayer for Ukraine and took up a collection of nearly £500 for the Ukraine Appeal.

Once again we found ourselves in the midst of another Covid wave and a number of members had to withdraw from the concert with Covid infections while more members tested positive for Covid not long after.

Our summer concert was Michael Haydn *Requiem in C minor* and Joseph Haydn *Maria Theresa Mass*. The Requiem had been extensively rehearsed on zoom during lockdown and it was lovely to finally perform it.

### Day-to-day running

The choir is blessed with many members who assist in its day-to-day operations. 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.

For many years we have had an informal arrangement for free storage of scores, staging and lighting in Milton Keynes thanks to a former choir member. This year it became necessary to formalise that arrangement and start paying rent for the facility. This gave us the incentive to install shelving thus making it easier to find scores. Many thanks to the choir members who helped with this.

As a Committee we have held our usual regular meetings. We are facing some challenges both in recruiting new members to the choir and in drawing in audiences for our concerts, both of which impact on our financial position. We will be focussing on these areas in the coming year.

### 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, 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, filled this year by David Roberts and Imogen Allen. Ordinary members of the Committee can only serve for a maximum continuous period of three years.

An EGM was held on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and the members approved the transfer of assets from The Danesborough Chorus (279281) to Danesborough Chorus (1188026), and the dissolution of The Danesborough Chorus.

### **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 sustained a loss of £7,000 in the year under review and our reserves now stand, as shown by the accounts, as just over £29,000. In order not to deplete our reserves further we have taken the step of increasing the membership subscription for the coming year.