



Minutes of the Committee meeting held at 36 Station Road, Woburn Sands on 14 November 2023

Present: Siân Rees (in the Chair); Peter Snelling; Ian Smith; David Roberts; Jan Liddie; Maria Seaton; Imogen Allen (attending by Zoom); Nick Wood; Vanessa Skelton (Minutes Secretary)

- | 1 | Apologies and Welcome | Action |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| | <p>Siân welcomed all to the meeting and, in particular, she welcomed the three new members on the committee, Jan Liddie, Maria Seaton and Nick Wood. There were no apologies.</p> | |
| | <p>2 Minutes of 5 September meeting, approval and matters arising not covered elsewhere</p> | |
| 2.1 | <p>Tessa had reported that she had not as yet managed to contact Chris Jolly concerning a centralised data storage system (2.5). It was felt this was a matter worth following up, and Imogen kindly agreed to pursue it.</p> | Imogen |
| 2.2 | <p>Suzanne Minocha had passed over the GDPR documentation that was needed (2.4).</p> | |
| 2.3 | <p>Tessa had reported that she had circulated a sheet asking for information from members as to where they put concert publicity flyers and posters (3.2), but sadly the sheet had gone missing. Siân volunteered to search amongst the papers in the cupboard at AGVH.</p> | Siân |
| 2.4 | <p>Julia had reported that she was confident that we did not need to hire copies of the <i>St John Passion</i> – there would be sufficient for those who did not own their own in choir stocks (3.3).</p> | |
| 2.5 | <p>Tessa was still in conversation with Jenny Harris about chairing the Communications sub-committee (7).</p> | |
| 2.6 | <p>Siân reported that it appeared that the request to choir members to do two or three Google searches a week over the course of the next few weeks to optimise our place when searches were made for choirs in the locality had been very effective, as, she said, we had noticeably moved up the lists (8). Nick wondered, however, whether what she was able to see was in fact the real picture – if she had been searching herself, the choir would move up her own list, but not necessarily up other people's. Vanessa volunteered to get Peter Skelton to search before a fresh drive was made, in which he would not participate, and then to ask him to search again. It was hoped this would give the true picture.</p> | Vanessa and Siân |
| 2.7 | <p>David pointed out that the van we used was in fact a Luton Box van, not a 3.5 tonne van (15.4). There was thus no problem in a choir member born after 1 January 1997 taking over from Peter Skelton. Vanessa pointed out that it was not that Peter wished to relinquish the role, simply that the Van Hire Company would not allow him to drive it once he was 75. It was agreed that Siân would ask members for a volunteer to take over from Peter.</p> | Siân |

2.8 The minutes were approved.

3 Treasurer's report and membership update

Peter had circulated his spreadsheet showing the current state of play with this year's accounts. He reported that sadly the predicted deficit of £1,000 showing on his budget was likely to grow to £3,000, which was of course extremely serious for the choir, given the deficits from the previous two years. The main reasons for the predicted losses were, firstly, that membership stood at 78 – his budget had been based on a membership of 85, which would have resulted in a further £1400 in respect of subs. The second reason was that sadly Nevilles Funerals, who had kindly sponsored us for several years, had now withdrawn their sponsorship – we will also lose their advertising revenue in the programme - a total loss from the budget of £650. He had already informed members of the choir, and asked anyone who knew a business who might sponsor us in future to let him know.

3.2 He was, however, hopeful that we may get more members in the near future – Amanda had had some enquiries recently, and two possible new members had said they would attend this Wednesday. Imogen said she was worried that Wednesday's rehearsal, in which we would still be grappling with the difficulties of the Paul Patterson piece, might be off-putting for new members, and she suggested that if possible they should be asked to attend the rehearsal on 29 November instead, which would be mainly for carols. **Siân** would try to contact Amanda in time before the rehearsal.

Siân

3.3 There was also hope, he said, that the 'Come and Sing' event arranged for 2 March 2024 might raise more than he had budgeted. If our publicity worked, he hoped that we would get more attendees than predicted. Whilst it was hoped the event would in itself raise revenue, it also might bring in new members.

3.4 Siân reported that she had contacted Inspiring Music, a Music Education Hub based in Central Beds. She had had a very positive response – they were happy to help promote the choir and its events.

3.5 Ian reported he was now on the Board of the Bedford Music Hub, which could also help with promotion.

3.6 David said that there was good news in that the printing company we used were now offering 10% discount for charities.

3.7 Maria said that on a recent visit to MKC station she had noticed piles of Milton Keynes Chorale A6 flyers printed on light card, one of which she showed the meeting, and wondered if we might produce similar type flyers, and investigate where we could distribute them. **David** would follow this up.

David

3.8 Nick said that now the Choir's Registered Office was a Bedfordshire address, he believed it would be possible to tap into Bedfordshire funding pots. He said that Bedford Choral Society had managed to get a grant from the Harper Trust recently, regarding a challenge to raise their membership to 150 on their 150th anniversary. He felt something similar might be successful as we approached our 50th anniversary. He would give this more thought.

Nick

3.9 **Peter** reported that **Imogen** had offered to take over two of the tasks he had accumulated over the years – collection of subs and of information relating to Gift

Peter and Imogen

Aid. Discussions between the two of them to get the takeover underway were ongoing.

- 3.10 He also reported that he was still having problems with NatWest Bank arising from the setting up of a different account for the new charity. Imogen had suggested changing to the Coop bank. This would need authority from the Trustees, which was given in principle. Imogen would investigate further and report back. She believed that the advantages of the Coop Bank included a good on-line service for which no charges were made to charities.

Imogen

4 HMRC Corporation Tax update

Siân explained that the choir had received a penalty notice and a fine of £100 for failure to file Corporation tax accounts. The senior officers of the choir had been under the impression these accounts did not need submitting, following confirmation that there would be no tax payable, as we were a charity operating at a loss. However, a penalty notice had been sent to Tessa's address, which was then the registered office. As she had not seen the notice in time, being on holiday, HMRC had proceeded to issue a fine. This had been paid, accounts had quickly been submitted, and an appeal against the fine had been made. We were waiting to hear the outcome of this, but there was reasonable hope that the £100 fine paid would be recovered.

5 Closing The Danesborough Chorus (charity 279281)

Peter reported that, unfortunately, it was still not possible to finalise this, as the Gift Aid position still needed finalising. He needed to register separately with the Charity Commission for gift aid purposes, and he was finding this extremely problematical. Once he had achieved registration, he was hopeful that the matter could be finalised fairly speedily. He would then complete the gift aid submission for the first half of 21/22, and the charity could be closed. Imogen then would complete the gift aid submission for the second half of 21/22, and for the year 22/23.

6 Future scheduled events this season

25 November 2023 – Rutter *Gloria*, Paul Patterson *Magnificat* and Bruckner *Locus iste, Ecce sacerdos & Afferentur regi*

- 6.1 Imogen had pointed out that the event clashed with the Woburn Lights Switch-on, which was scheduled earlier than usual this year. This meant that car parking could be trickier than usual for those people who went home after the rehearsal. It could, however, be an opportunity to circulate flyers between rehearsal and the concert, to get a few more door sales.
- 6.2 Ian reported that the trombone players had asked for their fees to be raised by £50 each if the concert were to be recorded. It was decided not to proceed with the plan to record. There were other recordings available for use on the website that would not eat into our depleted funds.
- 6.3 Ian wished to rehearse with Paul Carr, the organist, in the church on concert day morning, and asked if it would interfere with the setting up. It was agreed this shouldn't be a problem, as set up would finish at around 11.
- 6.4 He would check the band knew they needed to bring their own music stands.

Ian

6.5 It was agreed to raise the price of programmes to £2.

1 December 2023 – Frank Moran Centre Christmas Lights Switch-on

6.6 Ian had recently learnt that the Ampthill Town Band would also be playing, and had agreed to meet with their conductor and the organiser of the event on Zoom to discuss the programme, which would need some adjustment in the light of the news.

Ian

9 December 2023 - Frosts Garden Centre, 11:00-13:00

6.7 We now had enough singers to proceed.

6.8 **Peter** would give Ian the contact details at Frosts, so that **Ian** could sort out the details of the event. He had put together a programme – sheets would be needed, and for the rehearsal on 29 November.

Peter, Ian

19 December 2023 – Beds Fire & Rescue Christingle Service

6.9 Ian was waiting to hear further from Thomas Warner, the event organiser. He had already corrected the proof of the programme. Again, he would make sure there were copies of the sheets that were needed in time for the 29 November rehearsal.

Ian

23 March 2024 – Bach *St John Passion*

6.10 The six soloists had been booked, and arrangements had been finalised for the Joseph Baker Trust to contribute to their fees. Thanks were given to David for spotting this opportunity, and for making the arrangements.

6.11 Ian agreed that an electronic organ could be used for the continuo, so there need be no hire costs.

29 June 2024 – Will Todd *Mass in Blue, Fly me to the Moon, Ken Storry Gospel Express*

6.12 Ian was in communication with the soloist he was hoping to book, but the contract had not been finalised as yet. He had booked a Jazz Trio, for the sum of £1000 – he needed to give Beverley Thompson their details so she could formally confirm the booking.

Ian

6.13 David said he was waiting to hear from Making Music, who arranged our insurance, before booking the piano – the original insurers used by Making Music had withdrawn, and although new insurers had been found, it had not been confirmed that they would insure a hired piano as part of their standard provision.

7 Proposed joint concert with MKC – summer 2025

7.1 Ian, David, Peter and Tessa had met with officers from the Chorale about their suggestion for revising the tradition of joint concerts, which had been maintained from 1977 until MKC did not wish to participate in the event scheduled for 2018. They proposed a concert in 2025. They were, however, suggesting a major change to the old arrangements. They proposed that the costs and the responsibility for the concert should be shared, rather than alternating between the two choirs from year to year. They had proposed 2025, as this was both our 50th anniversary year, and

the year in which they were celebrating their first 50 years (which would in fact be 2024).

7.2 Another worry relating to the proposal was that they were suggesting a level of ticket price that the Danesborough officers believed was too high: £35, £30, £25 and £20 – such a high price level was likely to deter many sales, making the revenue MKC were hoping for unrealistic. With these figures, their predicted deficit for each choir was nearly £5000. Danesborough officers' view was that it was likely, in fact, to be higher than this. Discussions had, however, taken place as to a programme, should we decide to proceed. There had been difficulties in coming up with a suitable programme for which the conducting could be shared. In the interests of facilitating this, Ian had generously said that he would be happy to conduct an orchestral piece, and the programme of Dvořák's *New World Symphony* followed by Orff's *Carmina Burana* was provisionally agreed.

7.3 David said that he and his Danesborough colleagues had made their reservations clear at the meeting.

Nick said that while he understood the reservations expressed, it would give a vanishingly rare opportunity to sing a large and exciting work, and he hoped that it might be able to proceed with the project in some way.

Discussions as to a date had also taken place, and Will Swann, MKC chair, was approaching Ambassadors Theatre Group to see if there was availability on 22 June, 29 June or 6 July 2025.

It was agreed to make no decisions as yet, and to wait and see what MKC suggested following the meeting.

8 Forthcoming 50th Anniversary (2024/25 season)

8.1 Ian reported he had booked four wonderful soloists for the Messiah concert (16 November 2024) at reasonable fees: Carolyn Sampson, Anna Huntley, Peter Hoare and Ben Bevan. He had also booked the orchestra. He was working on what cuts should be made.

8.2 A pre-concert reception for Friends, soloists and founder members had been suggested. **Siân** would speak to Sharon Cashman about booking the proposed venue, The Inn at Woburn, as she had been involved in the last such event, and to Yvonne Ashmore, about inviting the Friends.

Siân

8.3 **Imogen** had been working on a fund-raising scheme involving sponsoring specific concerts or soloists for the anniversary year, and she would circulate her ideas. It was suggested that there should be a group working on this and other fund-raising ideas for the year. **Jan and Maria** agreed join with **Imogen** to work on this. David suggested approaching the Woburn Heritage Centre, who might be able to provide a lead to local traders, with a view to sponsorship. An approach to the Duke was also suggested – **Sian** would follow this up. **David** had found a list of charitable foundations which it might be possible to approach – he would pass this to the group. **Nick** said that once they had produced some sort of template for making such approaches, he would be happy to approach bodies that he knew of.

Imogen

**Imogen,
Jan and
Maria**

Siân

David

Nick

8.4 A celebratory meal had been proposed for the start of the season. Various venues had been suggested, and **Peter** agreed to talk further with Cranfield University, whose prices compared favourably with others, and whose location seemed most convenient for choir members. A provisional date of 5 October was agreed.

Peter

- 8.5 While suggestions had been made to involve a school in the 2024 Christmas concert, to be held at the Baptist Church, Hockcliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard, **Ian** said he believed that the standard of music was, distressingly, so low in many schools, that such a proposal was not practicable. He would, however, talk to Paul Dickens to see if some arrangement with the All Saints Church choir might be feasible. **Ian**
- 8.6 The proposal for the 29 March spring concert was Brahms' *German Requiem*, in the four-hands-piano arrangement. It was agreed that it should be sung in German.
- Henna Munn (one of the soloists booked for *the St John Passion*) was suggested as soloist, and Berlioz *Les nuits d'été* was suggested to go alongside the choir's piece. **Ian** would consider both suggestions **Ian**
- 9 Come and Sing fundraiser 2nd March 2024 at Mary Adams Hall, Woburn Sands**
- 9.1 Flyers were ready to go, as were adverts designed for local publications and the web – we were however, holding back on asking the choir themselves to advertise until after the concert, not wanting this to interfere with ticket sales.
- 9.2 Siân suggested a concessionary rate for young singers, and it was agreed that those under 25 should be charged only £5. **David** would alter the flyer to reflect this. **David**
- 9.3 There was some concern as to whether, if too many choir members attended, there would be sufficient room for potential new members. Peter said he thought this was very unlikely, but it was agreed that a show of hands from the choir as to whether they were likely to attend would enable an acceptable level of sales to the choir to be made. **Siân**
- 10 Charity Commission (a) setting up My Account update (b) changes to annual return (policies esp. safeguarding/extra questions)**
- 10.1 Siân reported that she had completed the details for the 'myaccount' charity commission service for the old charity. However, she is having difficulty in getting set up with the new charity.
- 10.2 She also said that there were new charity commission requirements in relation to charity's policies on various matters. She and Imogen would work on creating draft of the new policies that were necessary. **Siân and Imogen**
- 10.3 There was some discussion as to the need for strict safeguarding measures as young singers were being encouraged to attend the Come and Sing event. Ian, Nick and Imogen are all enhanced (ie working with children) DBS checked. Siân wondered if more members should be, while Nick cautioned against applying for DBS checking unless it was strictly necessary – he said that in fact this was illegal. It was agreed that providing at least one 'checked' member was present when minors were attending choir events, there was not in fact a problem.
- 11 Future meeting dates: 9 January 2024 – need to reschedule; 7 May; 3 September; AGM 9 October**
- 11.1 The January meeting date was rescheduled to 11 January 2024. It would be held at 36 Station Road, Woburn Sands.

12 Any other business

12.1 Imogen made the suggestion that there should be standard email addresses for office holders in the choir. There was already one for the membership secretary, but it might be helpful for others to be set up, so that, should an office holder be indisposed for any reason, someone else could deal with the business. **Imogen** agreed to investigate **Imogen**

12.2 **Peter** would meanwhile give Siân access to the main email address. **Peter**

Final