



Minutes of the Committee meeting held at 36 Station Road, Woburn Sands on 11 January 2024

Present: Peter Snelling (in the Chair); Siân Rees; Ian Smith; David Roberts; Jan Liddie; Maria Seaton; Imogen Allen; Nick Wood; Vanessa Skelton (minutes secretary)

Action

1 Apologies and welcome

Peter welcomed all to the meeting. There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of 14 November 2023 – approval and matters arising not covered elsewhere.

2.1 Nick and Imogen had been speaking about the idea of a centralised data storage system (2.1). **Nick** was familiar with such systems, and would put forward a plan of action. **Nick**

2.2 Imogen would report further on her daughter's researches into the Choir's position in Google searches, following the request to members to make further searches, once Ella had been able to write this up (2.6). Vanessa reported that her friend had also searched the position, though not in detail, and had noticed that a search of 'choirs in Leighton Buzzard' had shown Danesborough at number 3 three weeks before Christmas and at number 2 on 11 January.

2.3 Regrettably no-one had responded to Sian's request for a volunteer to drive the van, once Peter Skelton was forced to retire from the job (2.7). **Siân** volunteered to produce a written description of the job, for distribution to the choir. **Siân**

2.4 Peter pointed out that the December 2024 concert was to take place in the Baptist Church, Hockliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard, rather than the Methodist Church (8.5). Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved.

3. Treasurer's report

3.1 Peter reported that the loss for the November concert had been some £400 less than forecast, ticket sales having been better than predicted, and the costs slightly lower. The increase in the price of programmes (£2 rather than £1) had also increased the income.

3.2 This, together with the potential new members who had arrived this term, meant that the current forecasted loss for the year was a little less than had been previously reported.

3.3 The details of the new policy provided by Making Music had now arrived, and Peter reported that at first glance it appeared that it would provide sufficient cover for a piano hired for use in the Church. He would make a final check, but was hopeful we

Peter

would not need to take out supplementary insurance when hiring a piano for concerts.

4 Changing Bank Account – Imogen’s Proposal

4.1 Imogen had circulated a proposal that we should switch our bank account from NatWest to the Co-op Bank. The advantages of such a move were that payments into the account could be made via the post Office, that on-line banking was free to charities and that moneys could be transferred on-line to and from interest bearing accounts without incurring further costs. The committee asked various questions concerning matters such as requirements for multiple signatures on on-line payments being available, and, being satisfied that no disadvantages were evident, the proposal was accepted unanimously. It was agreed that there should be four possible signatories to the account, and that for all payments over £400 two signatures would be required. Peter noted that although the facility for his to be the sole signature on payments under the sum of £400 had been agreed by the committee some years previously, he did not remember, in fact, ever needing to be the sole signatory, and expected this position not to change.

4.2 Imogen would start on the process of opening a new account for the new Charity. The account for the old charity would need to remain with NatWest for the time being, as some receipts from long-standing friends were still received there.

5 Closing The Danesborough Chorus (charity 279281)

5. Peter reported that he was still unable to do this, as the gift aid position was still mired in seemingly interminable bureaucracy. He was still working on it, however, and hoped that he would one day report success.

6. Future scheduled events this season:

6.1 23 March 2024 – Bach St John Passion

Tim Grant-Jones had agreed to play the organ, although **Ian** still had to finalise matters relating to his fee and what organ was to be used. **Ian** also needed to talk to Nick Cutts about the requirement for the principle ‘cellist to arrive early. Once these matters were confirmed Peter would be able to finalise the budget.

Ian

David reported that he had looked at the programme notes that had been produced last time the Choir had performed the piece – these had stood the test of time well, and could be used again.

Ian had been giving thought to the positioning of the soloists, and would discuss this further with David and Siân

Ian

6.2 29 June 2024 – Will Todd Mass in Blue, Fly me to the Moon, Ken Storry Gospel Express

Ian reported that the band had been booked, as had Hilary Cronin, the soprano soloist.

He would let Ken Storry know we would be performing the Gospel Express, and offer him complimentary tickets.

Ian

7 Proposed joint concert with MKC – Summer 2025

7.1 Peter had been in further contact with Will Swann, the Chorale Chair. He had confirmed that Danesborough were happy to continue investigating whether we

believed the joint concert was feasible, but as yet, no commitment could be made. Our concerns centred about the accuracy of the financial model we had been shown and whether enough of our members would be happy to sing in a midweek concert (if that turned out to be the only option) AND to rehearse the afternoon of the concert day. ATG had offered us 9 or 10 June as midweek days, and Will had wondered whether this would allow us sufficient rehearsal time, as our March concert was scheduled two weeks later than the Chorale's. Ian said he believed we could be ready for either of those dates.

- 7.2 David had prepared what he felt was a more up-to-date financial model for the concert, and had circulated this to the committee, together, for comparative purposes, with the original model prepared by the Chorale. He had also circulated a paper showing his thoughts behind this, and other matters such as the use of the top tier of the theatre. After discussions of various points (the high price of the tickets suggested by the Chorale; the accuracy of the orchestral cost; how negotiable the terms offered by ATG were etc), it was agreed that **Ian** would contact the Chorale's conductor to discuss various matters relating to the orchestra which might save costs, and once this was done, **Peter** would tell Will that we believed we could be ready for the 9 or 10 June, and ask him to contact Nick Cutts for a quote for the orchestral costs. There was some urgency in this, and it was felt that we should now put the matter of a possible midweek concert to the Choir.

8 Forthcoming 50th Anniversary (2024/25 season)

8.1 5 October 2024 - Anniversary dinner

The Cranfield venue had now been booked, but Peter reported that the Choir had so far been fairly slow in signing up for the event, with only 31 tickets had been sold. **Siân** would ask Jenny to put details on the website. **David** reported that he could prepare a banner for use at the venue; he was thanked for this offer. It was agreed that any entertainment should be home grown, in the interests of economy.

8.2 16 November 2024 - Handel *Messiah*

Ian reported that the soloists had been booked. He would approach Nick Cutts for a quote for the orchestra. An organ would also be required.

Siân had written to the Duke of Bedford to invite him to the concert, but sadly he was unable to come. She had also emailed Jacqui Dankworth to invite her, but had not as yet received a response. She would try writing to her at The Old Rectory, Stockwell Lane, Wavendon.

So far a venue for a pre concert reception had not been found – all those so far contacted in Woburn had proved to be too expensive.

8.3 7 December 2024 - Christmas concert, Leighton Buzzard

The Baptist Church in Leighton Buzzard had been booked, as had Paul Daggett as organist. It was agreed that **Peter** should approach the Leighton Buzzard Arts Forum to see if they might be prepared to award a grant.

Ian said that he had been giving thought to whether it would be possible to fit in extra rehearsals for the concert. He had started rehearsing BCS's Christmas concert in July last year, and he wondered if this might be possible for the Danesborough. He would give this further consideration.

The idea of asking Members and Friends if they would like to sponsor, for example, individual carols was raised, and it was agreed this should be pursued.

8.4 29 March 2025 – Brahms German Requiem

Ian had booked the soloists, Lottie Bagnell and Dominic Keating-Roberts, both local professionals.

Siân confirmed that the church had been booked.

8.5 28 June 2025 – Haydn Nelson Mass, Mozart Solemn Vespers tbc

In the event of the proposed joint concert not proving practicable, this was agreed as the programme. It was a repeat of the first concert the choir had performed with an orchestra, back in 1977.

8.6 5 July 2025(?) – Garden party

The alternative date of 2 July was proposed, being a Wednesday (previous such garden parties had taken place on the Wednesdays following the summer concerts).

Siân would talk to Julia Dickens about this.

Siân

9 Come & Sing fundraiser 2 March 2024 at Mary Adams Hall, Woburn Sands

9.1 Sales to choir members were going slowly. Ian would remind members to get on with booking.

Ian

9.2 Tim Grant-Jones had agreed to play for the event, using Tessa's keyboard.

9.3 Siân would be requesting members to make cakes nearer the time. She was also intending to inspect the Hall on Monday morning.

Siân

10 Sponsorship

10.1 Imogen, Maria and Jan had met, and wished to put to the committee a proposal for a sub-committee dealing with all fund-raising activities. They hoped to produce ideas for social activities (eg a wine tasting), with the intention of raising funds as well as raising the profile of the choir locally; to bring forward and encourage ideas for sponsorship; help with obtaining advertisers for programmes and to assist with grant applications. They produced a list of various local and Milton Keynes businesses they had come up with which might sponsor the choir in some way, together with various organisations which might be approached for grants. The Committee welcomed the proposal, and Imogen, Maria and Jan agreed to start work in earnest, and to report back to the committee.

Imogen,
Maria.
Jan

10.2 Imogen had circulated a draft intended to be placed on the website for possible use for people who had contacts they wished to approach regarding sponsorship. She would work on this. Nick would talk to Jenny about the possibility of adding a button for immediate donations.

Imogen
Nick

11. Charity Commission Policies Update

Siân reported that the Charity Commission had produced a list of matters which they suggested all charities should consider adopting policies on. She felt we should produce policies on Internal Risk and Trustees' Expenses, and we should review our policy on Safeguarding. She and Imogen agreed to work together on these. Siân would also approach those members who had enhanced DBS checks, and would confirm that they were in order.

Siân
Imogen
Siân

12 Future meeting dates: 7 May; 3 September; AGM 9 October

These were agreed

13. Any other business

Ian reported that a member had approached him, suggesting that the rehearsal time should be moved forward by 15 minutes. It was agreed that while an earlier finish time might well suit some members, others, especially those who worked, might find it difficult to arrive promptly for 7.30. A show of hands amongst members would therefore be requested. **Ian**

Draft