**SOLIHULL CHANDOS CHOIR**

**MINUTES of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**HELD on TUESDAY 13th JULY 2021**

**In view of continuing exceptional circumstances, the AGM was held on-line using ‘Zoom’.**

**1** The meeting was run by Susannah Hoskins. A quorum of at least 25% members joined on-line.

**2.** **APOLOGIES:** Jan Baylis, Clive Blakey, Alison Esher, Barbara Graham, Eileen Knight, Ray Lewis, Mary Prestwood,Mary Wilkes**.** No record of other absent members was available.

**3.** **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** held 14th July 2020 were proposed for acceptance as a true and accurate record, by Susannah Hoskins, seconded by Geoff Biggs – all in favour.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**: There were no matters arising.

**5. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:** Susannah thought it had felt like a long year despite the absence of in-person rehearsal and concerts. During the year there had been 49 emails to the choirincluding reminders**,** regular rehearsal notes (thanks to Linda) and all sorts of people had kept us informed of musical resources and performances. During the year there had been 19 or 20 Zoom rehearsals, 12 with Warwickshire Singers. Currently choir membership stands at 42 with 5 new people joining in Zoom, who we hope will return when proper rehearsals commence. Susannah looked forward to meeting other singers in person, but we need to look at the membership situation in September. The choir’s WhatsApp group has been very active – if anyone wishes to join they should contact Maria Brown.

Even without the opportunities to meet, the choir has continued to offer social support to members and it was heartening to see how strong bonds of friendship have been formed.

Susannah thanked the committee for their continued support. During the year there has been a huge amount of work dealing with government guidance, writing to MPs, completing risk assessments etc. There has been continuing level of work to keep the choir going and thanks were given to all those who contributed. Particular thanks were given to Barbara Graham, who for many years served on the committee and took the weekly register. She will continue to sing, but has retired from the committee/register duties. Volunteers were requested to take over the register at least.

Looking forward, there is still some uncertainty, but choir is ready to return to normal rehearsals and concerts. Membership of Making Music has been beneficial with all the information they provide and they have confirmed we will be insured while rehearsing for or presenting a concert. Although it will be a year late, we will celebrate the choir’s 50th anniversary. If anyone has archive material, photographs etc. Susannah will put them on the website. MH interjected, thanking Susannah for dealing with the website and offering his support as far as photo sharing etc. was concerned. He also offered to hold some video interviews.

All being well, our first concert will be held on 20th November, performing *Messiah*, which was the choir’s very first performance.

We know we need to recruit new members and despite the challenges last year, our website has proved to be useful for people who are looking for a suitable choir.

Gill Bickley proposed a vote of thanks to Susannah for going above and beyond normal ‘duties’. Without her technical support dealing with Zoom and everything else, things would have been very different. Geoff Biggs was very pleased to second the proposal and all choir members wholeheartedly agreed.

**6. TREASURER’S REPORT**: The year-end accounts to 31st March 2021 had been completed and signed by an Independent Examiner and a copy was put on screen. Because rehearsals had been limited to ‘Zooming’, there was much less to report but we still have to produce accounts for the Charities Commission.

During the year, there had been no normal rehearsals and no concerts, so in total the income was £3293 and expenditure had been £3646, giving an overall loss for the year of £353. The subscription income of £2760 had just covered payments made to our musicians. With the majority of other income coming from Gift Aid and with outgoings for Making Music, publicity and general expenses we were left with a deficit for the year, which was not as bad as it could have been. In explaining the balance sheet, we have £320 benefits (prepayments) for a the annual dinner reservation (£120) next year and £200 Parish magazine publicity spread over the year ahead. Also, an item for sundry creditors amounting to £1250, which is ring fenced for special costs for our anniversary year.

Ray stated that we were in a financially strong position despite the awful year we had gone through.

It was confirmed that we had a new, secure garage to store our staging, the cost of which was £10.00 per month. There was a query about choir cushions but they had been written off some time ago.

**7. ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTS**: proposed for acceptance by Pat Prior, Beryl Harrison seconded - all present agreed.

**8. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**. Ray thanked John Hulse for his continued support as Independent Examiner and Geoff Biggs proposed, Ray Dickinson seconded, that he be asked to continue for another year – all agreed. Secretary would write a letter of thanks.

**9. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION**. It was proposed that the subscription remain at £120 per annum, to be made in one payment, or instalments agreed with Liz Woolf. The subscription may be subject to review according to the general situation.

Leon pointed out that the charge equated to £3.15 per week and was excellent value for money. GillB said we needed to bear in mind that costs will rise and membership is falling.

There were no objections to the subscription rate and was proposed for acceptance by Susannah Hoskins, Liz Woolf seconded, passed after a show of hands.

**10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE**: Susannah pointed out that normally we would obtain written nominations in advance of the AGM, but because of Covid, once again, this had not been possible. However, Officers and members of committee had agreed to stand for re-election as follows:

**Officers**:

Chairman: - Susannah Hoskins

Treasurer - Ray Dickinson

Secretary – Gillian Bickley

Concert Secretary – Maria Brown

Membership Secretary – Liz Woolf

Librarian – Penny Harbour

Publicity officer – Malcolm Harbour

11. **Committee Members**: Yvonne Ross (Social Secretary)

Jan Baylis (Making Music rep)

After a show of hands, Officers and committee members were re-elected for a further term.

It was confirmed that the social secretary made a valuable contribution working for fundraising and social events. Julie Hunt was still happy to deal with ‘Friends’ and Malcolm Harbour would work on the handover as soon as possible. Jim Brown had resigned from choir but wished to continue as a Friend.

**12. MUSICAL DIRECTORS REPORT**: Leon said it had been a very good thing choir had stopped rehearsing last year when we did. It appeared that other choirs had had many cases of Covid when they continued to rehearse/perform until the official government lockdown on 23rd March 2020. It had meant that we had to cancel the planned Chandos Singing Day and also the ‘French Impressions’ concert in April, but thankfully we *had* stopped.

We were able to use the Zoom portal for rehearsals, but they are far from ideal. Singing in virtual isolation, or singing along with professional choirs on YouTube, will never compete with singing in harmony together. It did keep us ‘ticking over’ and helped to keep people in touch with one another. Leon thanked Susannah for being such a terrific DJ.

If nothing else, the pandemic served to prove singing in a choir is a collective and co-operative thing and without it we would all be the poorer. Music lifts the spirit and brings us together. Leon announced the music for next year, but he was happy for members to give him their written ideas/suggestions for music they would like to perform for next season and onwards into the future.

The programme he proposed for next year is, currently:-

Matinee - 50th Birthday concert. 20th November 2021 – Handel’s *Messiah*.

Easter 50th Birthday Concert – Sat 2nd April 2022 – ‘Let all the world in every corner sing’ - with organ, brass and percussion.

Summer 50th birthday concert – 9th July 2022. ‘A Glorious Baroque birthday’ with baroque orchestra and 5 soloists.

**13**. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**:

Geoff Biggs was worried about the low numbers of basses and tenors and said we must look at gaining more members. We must continue to encourage people to join the choir. Leon suggested offering incentives for members to bring new members. We should actively encourage people to join. There are many young musicians who could be interested in singing and it is important that we spread the word!

Malcolm Harbour said that as soon as we have a programme and venue agreed, he would begin publicity again. Once we have started to rehearse for *Messiah* he would sort it out. We have the sing-along ‘bring and share’ tea party on the 14th August and members could bring people along to that.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.