



Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

October 25th 2021

Chair: Jonathan Sayer

35 members attended the meeting, representing 67% of those members currently paying a subscription to the society.

Welcome and Apologies

Jonathan Sayer, in the chair, welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Apologies received: Karyl Lewis, Ruth Dewland, Wendy Walker, Annabel Hammond, David Mugford, Steve McIntyre, Ros McIntyre, Jessica Smith, Jill Race, Liz Sutherland, Marion McDonald, Jonathon Winnicott and Liz Sutherland.

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted unanimously as a true record.

Reports from Chair, Treasurer and Musical Director for 2020-21.

These reports were submitted in writing before the meeting and are transcribed here as written, with one or two explanatory insertions.

Chair's Report:

Jonathan made his report in two sections, dealing the events of the past year and with plans for the future.

The year since the last AGM.

'Your committee was determined that Fareham Phil should do its best to continue in operation in difficult circumstances.

Virtual rehearsals by Zoom and an Open-Air rehearsal

We started the September term 2020, with "virtual rehearsals by Zoom" where we rehearsed an exciting programme of music devised by Andrew including new African inspired pieces and some familiar Choruses from Messiah. We had a good take up by members – initially around 40 attendees rising to 50 on occasion. We stayed in touch with members unable to participate online, sending out regular updates. The Zoom rehearsals continued throughout the year, with Andrew introducing both challenging and seasonally appropriate new music. The circumstances allowed us to arrange an "open air" live rehearsal in the park behind Fareham Leisure Centre which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. The poor weather prevented further outdoor rehearsals but we continued online through the summer in order to maintain continuity.

The return to in-person rehearsals

Following careful consideration and planning by your committee - in particular by Susan and Andrew - we were able to return to in-person rehearsals this term. I am very pleased that we have regularly seen 40 or so singers attend each week and overall around 50 members are participating.

Notwithstanding the limitations and constraints which we have chosen to accept in order to make this possible - I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of singing together with you all once more: I have found it both uplifting and inspiring – and there's a need for lots of that!

The current situation

We had hoped that as time passed, we would be able to take a more relaxed approach to rehearsal arrangements but the current growth in the number of Covid cases – and concerns raised by a number of choir members- have led us to amend our protocols accordingly.

We cannot eliminate all risk but our approach has been to take sensible steps to address the risk. This includes:

During rehearsal: 'Space and Face' - we monitor and manage the ventilation, we space the seating, we recommend mask wearing. If you are unable to wear a mask or visor while singing, we have seats available at the front.

Before Rehearsal: 'Test and Jab' - we encourage you carry out a Lateral Flow Test each week and encourage you to get your booster jab. One of the bright spots in the news at present are reports of how effective the booster vaccine is. I am looking forward to my invitation for my jab and will try to be the first in the queue on the day!

The immediate future

The financial resources of the Choir are currently sound. The year 2020/21 saw a small reduction in the value of the Choir's reserve funds. This however maintains a strong position to face an uncertain future. We are planning for a Concert at the end of this term, and we are looking ahead to the programme for 2022 with excitement, but that has to be tempered with concern for the changing circumstances. In facing that future your Committee and I are determined that we continue to maintain the organisation and infrastructure – and the singing heart - of FPC in the best shape we can so that we may quickly and efficiently respond to the rapidly changing circumstances.

As we plot our way forward, we will keep everyone informed on our discussions and decisions.

My role as Chair

I had planned to resign at last year's AGM after serving my four years as your Chair, but remained as Chair for a further year so as not to hand over at a difficult time. Now that we have started live rehearsals once again with a good attendance, the time has definitely come for fresh legs. Nobody has yet come forward to take over the role, which is perhaps understandable in the current uncertain circumstances so I am willing to continue in post - on the understanding that, for personal reasons, I may not be able to attend every single Committee Meeting, or heaven forbid, every Concert! We will carry out some succession planning over the next year and keep you advised of our progress.

Thank you

So now to finish by saying "Thank you".

First to Susan, who has very effectively and efficiently delivered the role of Secretary. The amount of effort, insight and experience Susan brings to bear on her role is evidenced by the consistently excellent output she produces for us all. I rely heavily on Susan's advice, guidance and support in my role and am always impressed by the quality, the timeliness and the relevance of her decision making and her communication to us all.

The weekly updates, with their clear instruction on what music to prepare, where to find it and how to use it; the instructions on what to do next at rehearsal, who is doing what and when; the preparations for and reporting on Committee Meetings – all of this is invaluable.

The strong position the Choir is in at the moment is due very significantly to Susan's determined efforts on our behalf!

There was a short pause at this point while a bouquet of flowers was presented to Susan.

Anne Stewart took the opportunity to comment that, although she knew several people who had rehearsed with their choirs via 'Zoom' none had had such a versatile and seamless experience as this choir. She appreciated the effective use of aspects of 'Zoom' such as the breakout rooms for sectional rehearsals and for socialising.

Jonathan then continued with thanks to Keith, for his significant contribution as both Treasurer and Librarian.

"Determined and hardworking, I know I can rely completely on Keith's output and advice as we plot our way through these challenging circumstances.

Next to your Section Reps and other Committee members: To Chris Oakley, Jess Smith, Kate Baker Ann Gardner, Pam Mawby and Iain Wilkie. Their contributions are vital. Your committee have worked really hard this year to maintain the "singing heart" of the Choir and in particular to prepare us carefully for the return to live rehearsal.'

He then called for a collective vote of thanks

'Now a point to acknowledge the contribution of Sheila Javes. This term Sheila, having been Deputy Conductor of the Choir for over thirty years, has decided she can no longer continue to attend rehearsals. Sheila's aggregate contribution over that time has been immense, including: the Wedding Choir, Voice testing, fund raising, Repertoire review, soloist support, Summer Singing Day organisation, infill rehearsal conducting, chief discipline person! - a whole range of effort that has been at the heart of our continuing success.

We plan to acknowledge Sheila's contribution at the Christmas Concert and in other ways later, but now may I ask for a vote of thanks from all the Choir to Sheila.

And now of course to Andrew – Thank you for your continuing enthusiasm, energy and drive on our behalf in what must currently be very difficult circumstances for music makers. For all your effort and determination in preserving the present of Fareham Philharmonic Choir in order to secure our future: thank you.

Finally, thank you all, Fareham Philharmonic Choir members, together we can plot a path for the future which will continue to see us singing and performing as a choir, live and in each other's company.'

Musical Director's Report

'Well, what a year 2020/21 has been! I don't want to dwell on or comment in any detail upon the challenges faced by all Choirs nationwide over the past 18 months. We have all had to adjust and make the best of what has been possible. The mere thought of rehearsing online 2 years ago would not have been entertained by even the most open-minded MD of Choir Committee, yet we, as a Choir, have rehearsed, socialised, had some laughs and made music on Zoom!

We continued with a good, regular number of singers and also welcomed some guests which was lovely. Many choirs have not been able to continue and the fact we were able to continue as a choir with such numbers is testament to the determination and strength of its members. We managed to cover a wide variety of repertoire, re-visiting known pieces as well and learning new ones too. It was very good to see members on a weekly basis and the breakout room feature was a real tonic.

Fingers crossed we will not have to return to Zoom rehearsals in the coming months. Sensible measures are in place and these should ensure that face-to face- rehearsals can continue.

I would like to thank the Committee for their support and wise counsel along the way. Thanks also to Brian for taking sectional rehearsals and for taking over when the wife had its' wobbles. Thanks to Keith for keeping us financially afloat and to Jonathan for continuing in the role as Chairman and his thoughts and guidance as we planned our way through the Covid mire. But thanks in particular to Susan for her determination, advice and genius in all that is Zoom and for being the ever present and supportive contact for us all in very uncertain times.

So onwards now – keep safe and thank you all. We now need to re-group and enjoy making music together again.

Treasurer's Report and Summary of Accounts.

Commentary on the accounts

I'd like to thank David Cockshoot for his examination of the accounts and confirmation that all is in order. I haven't included any figures from last year as I don't think a comparison is meaningful. We haven't had any concerts or any of our usual income generators, such as music hire, refreshments, raffles etc. We haven't had any fund raisers this year as we decided that it would not be right to ask members for any more money than you were already paying.

Subscription income for the year is a little over £5,000. This represents an average of 58 paying members including some guests from other choirs. Our previous chair Ute Bretschneider joined us all the way from Leipzig for a while. The guests have all left us now and returned to their own choirs. We currently have 52 paying members.

The gift aid reclaim is lower than usual because we could only claim on subscriptions received up to 31 March. The final 4 months of 2021 will be part of the claim made next year. I can confirm that the claim included in these accounts has been received from HMRC.

Expenses are represented mainly by the weekly fees paid to the Musical Director and Accompanist without whom the whole operation would have been impossible.

All St John Passion scores were retrieved bar one. All the orchestral parts were retrieved with the exception of one cello part for which we had to pay an administration fee of £20. As a gesture of goodwill, we decided to pay the soloists a proportion of their fee.

Subscription, insurance and PRS fee are all part of our membership commitment to Making Music. I can confirm that we have only taken out the lowest level of insurance this year (Bronze) as the one claim we might have had to make would have been the cancellation of the Chichester concert. However, the insurance does not cover cancellation due to a communicable disease.

The overall result is a deficit of a little over £1,200 which is paid for out of reserves. There was some debate over the justification for this, but we decided that those who have gone before us would have approved of us using part of the reserves to keep the choir going during an emergency.

At the balance sheet date we had £1,265 in the Current account and £21,592 in the Reserve account. We've held over the sponsorship of £1,000 from Hampshire County Council in the hopes they will allow us to repurpose this against another project, and we've held over the Friends Subscription as they haven't yet had the benefit.

So, we're still in pretty good shape and ready for the next challenge.

Proposals

That these accounts be accepted by the meeting

Proposed Jonathan Sayer, Seconded Iain Wilkie

That the subscription for 2021-22 be set at £120 to be collected by monthly direct debit of £10

Proposed: Jonathan Sayer

Seconded Jo Vartan

Election of Officers and Committee

Current officers and committee members

Jonathan Sayer (chair), Keith Powers (treasurer), Susan Burt (secretary), Jessica Smith (Sop1), Pam Mawby (Sop 2) Kate Baker (Alto1), Ann Gardner (Alto 2), Chris Oakley (Tenor), Iain Wilkie

Jonathan Sayer had been Chair of the committee for four years, had remained in post last year because of the pandemic and should be standing down at this meeting. However, because the exceptional circumstances still prevailed there had been little opportunity for succession planning so Jonathan agreed to remain in post, though with involvement that might need to be reduced from time to time. During the course of the next year it was hoped to prepare somebody else to take on the role.

Kate Baker stood down at this meeting and Liz Elston was elected to be the new 1st Alto rep.

Proposed: Gill Pickburn,

Seconded Marian Lusher.

The Bass Rep role is still vacant but there are two basses on the committee which is at full strength because Iain Wilkie joined it in 2020.

Any Other Business

Jo Vartan proposed a vote of thanks to Jonathan for all that he has done in holding the choir and committee together during his term of office and particularly during the last 18 months.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.