

Barnet Choral Society

Minutes of 83rd Annual General Meeting of Barnet Choral Society held at QE Boys' School 29 November 2023

1. Apologies for absence:

E Coker, M Jones, J Lowe, E Marner, F Mitchell, C Sanders, P Smith.

2. Minutes of 82nd Annual General Meeting held 8 March 2023:

Accuracy: The minutes were agreed.

Matters arising: None.

3. Reports

3.1 Chair

Copies of the report had been distributed previously and are available in the minute book. The report was adopted unanimously.

3.2 Musical Director's Report

The Musical Director gave a verbal report.

3.3 Adoption of the Annual Accounts

Copies of the accounts had been distributed previously and are available in the minute book. In reply to an informal question on the loss, which is larger than in previous years, M Benaim commented that the choir's finances had been affected by Covid-19, but viewed over three years 2020 to 2023, the choir has broken even. Referring specifically to the year ended 31 July 2023, M Benaim said the loss was caused mainly by three factors:

1. Lower subscription income as the choir has lost members;
2. Lower audience numbers and hence ticket sales, and
3. The choir received donation and sponsorship in previous years which were not repeated in 2022-23.

M Benaim confirmed we are looking for ways to reduce costs and have raised ticket prices to help address these issues. The position will be reviewed at the year end.

D Plaut expressed concern about the reserves policy, which is to reserve sufficient funds to cover 50% of our running expenses. This appears to be the case, but the accounts state that current reserves in fact exceed 50% of our costs. M Benaim said that the choir can if necessary cease operating without any ongoing costs (eg. regular salary payments). The position has been discussed with the proposed incoming Treasurer J Crawford and D Plaut's concern was noted.

H Sharp suggested that the choir could apply for grants from Barnet Council, as has been done for other choirs. M Kirk suggested this could be linked to funding for workshops. The Musical Director R McCleery commented that some time would have to be invested in researching grant applications, and stated he is willing to review grant applications but not to formulate them.

J Nelhams queried why the accounts show Gift Aid income which is apparently two years behind the accounting date. H Melling explained that the accounts figure is for the tax year 2021/22. The claim for tax year 2022/23 has just been submitted to HMRC and the Gift Aid income should be more for this year.

The report was adopted unanimously.

3.4 Adoption of Annual Report of the Society

Copies of the Report had been distributed previously and are available in the minute book.
The report was adopted unanimously.

4. Motions for discussion

4.1 Adoption of the revised Constitution

The Chair thanked M Benaim and D Plaut for their work on updating the Constitution. M Benaim advised that the revised Constitution is based on the standard template provided by the Charity Commission. J Nelhams noted that in places the Constitution refers to statutes, and asked what will happen if the legislation changes. M Benaim replied that in such a case, the Constitution will be amended in line with guidance from the Charity Commission. J Nelhams also pointed out a missing bracket at the top of page 4; M Benaim confirmed this will be amended before the Constitution is published on the website.

Proposed by M Benaim, passed by majority (J Nelhams against).

4.2 Adoption of the revised Rules

Proposed by M Benaim, passed unanimously.

4.3 Sanction James Crawford as new Honorary Treasurer

It was noted that, as J Crawford is to stand for election as Treasurer, this motion was superfluous and it was duly withdrawn.

4.4 Could the choir consider an alternative venue to St. John's Friern Barnet for one or more concerts?

Proposed by Hilary Sharp and seconded by Gillian Hilton. H Sharp commented that St. John's is difficult to get to from Potters Bar (where several members and audience members come from) and parking is especially difficult. J Williams agreed that it can be difficult to persuade potential audience members to come to St. John's. Depending on where a choir member is seated, such as at the ends of rows or on the floor, it can also be difficult to hear and the lighting is poor.

M Lehmann replied that the Committee has looked at alternative venues and any members may suggest possibilities. The downsides of St. John's as a venue were acknowledged; however, the hire cost of £520 is reasonable, the facilities are good and the church staff are very helpful. P Coleman reminded the members that in the past we performed mainly in Barnet Church, which is the centre of Barnet; however, the hire cost is double that of St. John's and their facilities and parking are poor. East Barnet School has excellent parking, but their hire cost has increased and the hiring body is difficult to deal with, and the acoustics and lighting are not acceptable.

M Kirk noted that the Committee are considering using QE Boys' school hall, where the balcony may be used for audience seating. J Madejczyk suggested using the Ewen Hall and S Cohen said the Committee would re-examine this option. C Fletcher commented that we have also looked at Mount Grace School and Dame Alice Owen's School, although these are in Potters Bar and therefore not appropriate for Barnet Choral Society. R Lawson suggested the Chicken Shed theatre and either she or the Committee will make enquiries. Oak Hill College in Chase Side was also suggested.

In conclusion, M Benaim said the Committee is aware that St. John's is not ideal. The Committee is actively looking for an alternative, while trying to resolve the issues at St. John's. Members' concern is noted and the Committee will report back to the members.

5. Elections

Chair

Shelagh Cohen:

Proposed by M Lehmann, seconded by J Nelhams – elected unanimously.

Honorary Secretary

Jacqueline Thomson:

Proposed by M Benaim, seconded by H Javes – elected unanimously.

Honorary Treasurer

James Crawford:

Proposed by M Benaim, seconded by H Javes – elected unanimously.

General Committee Members: There were six nominations.

Member	Proposed by	Seconded by
Mike Benaim	H Javes	M Kirk
Howard Javes	M Kirk	J Nelhams
Meg Kirk	J Nelhams	M Lehmann
Marilyn Lehmann	J Nelhams	Jo Nelhams
Jim Nelhams	H Javes	M Lehmann
Jo Nelhams	J Thomson	M Benaim

All six were elected unanimously as committee members for the year 2023 - 2024.

6. Positions for re-adoption

Honorary President

Jonathan Rathbone. Re-adopted unanimously.

Honorary Vice Presidents

Pat Coleman, Gillian Gardner-Smith, Neil Kobish, Bob Swinstead and Meg Kirk were re-adopted unanimously.

Honorary Independent Examiner

Mike Wiffen: re-adopted unanimously.

7. AOB

M Arkwright commented that our Christmas concert on 16 December 2023 is on the same day as Rowantree Choir's, which reduces our potential audience. S Cohen replied that the Committee does liaise with other local choirs to avoid clashing dates, but it was not possible on this occasion.

M Cranfield asked if we could have one popular and well-known work in each concert along with more modern and diverse pieces. S Cohen felt we were moving in that direction, and R McCleery commented that he is still learning what the choir's strengths are. He is keen to introduce new music.

J Nelhams kindly offered tickets that he cannot use for a concert at the Barbican to choir members.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 8:00pm.

Signed.....

Date.....