

## SHEFFIELD PHILHARMONIC CHORUS COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 10<sup>TH</sup> January 2024, 19.00 to 21.45

Present: Anne Adams, Jo Briddock (Chair), Marianne Grayson, Helen Kirk, Jim Monach, Christine Pennington, Jenny Swann, Steve Terry (Vice Chair), Kathy Towers  
(minutes)

1. **Apologies: Patrick Callaghan, Jane Parkin, Sally Turnbull**
2. **Declaration of any conflicts of interest.**

There were none.

### 3. Minutes

3.1 Minutes of meeting held on 18th October 2023 were approved.

3.2 Matters arising – outstanding actions were checked and updated (see action list). All actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed, other than the Yorkshire Carol Book which will be taken forward in 2024.

3.3 The Annual Report has not yet been uploaded to the Charity Commission website, due to the correct code not having been sent to AA.

3.4 It was agreed that three people will be nominated to provide CC updates in future. JB will ask Jane Parkin, and Marianne Grayson and Steve Terry agreed to be second and third in line (respectively) once the current hiccup has been resolved.

**ACTIONS: AA to resolve Charity Commission anomaly and upload annual report.**

**JB to approach Jane Parkin.**

### 4. Governance

4.1.1 Finance. Jane Parkin's finance reports and summary were reviewed and approved. SPC's current bank balances on 1<sup>st</sup> January are Co-op Bank account £34,531.15 and savings account £71,000. Total is £105, 531.15.

It was noted that fixed costs are now covered by subs. Concert costs must be covered from elsewhere which accounts for the anticipated £13K loss. The ongoing reserve of £70K is reassuring but it was pointed out that this should not be relied upon to fund concert. It is an SPC Strategic Aim to be 'sustainable'. There was also mention of the possibility of seeking external match funding for ongoing initiatives.

Another member spoke of the long-term need to attract young people into the choir and/or concerts – to boost audience numbers and to support the long-term future of the Chorus. All agreed that it would be a good idea to organise at least one concert a year requiring a youth choir. Ticket prices should be set to assure affordability.

Another suggestion was twinning the Chorus with university and/or school choirs which was thought to be an interesting possibility.

A further suggestion was a concert featuring music that accompanies video games.

It was agreed that the Event Planning Group should flesh out ideas for making self-funded concerts more popular and financially successful – also meeting SPC's aims of inclusiveness and diversity.

JB suggested that the EPG should meet monthly and Jan 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> were mooted as dates.

**ACTION: JB to confirm date for next EPG meeting.**

Anne Adams was congratulated for (finally) securing the £500 refund from the City Hall.

It was reported that 40 members have not yet paid their subs or made arrangements to do so. It was agreed that JB will make an announcement at the next rehearsal to the effect that anyone who has not paid by end January will not be able to sing in the next concert.

It was noted that a budget for the French trip is still awaited from Matthew Morgan and that a contingency of £1000 has been set aside in the 2023 – 2024 budget. JB is to (continue to) remind MM.

### **2022 – 2025 budgets**

These show assets decreasing over the next 8 – 9 years.

A member asked whether the reserves are held in a high-interest account.

A further suggestion was expanding the Friends scheme to generate more Friends and so boost this income.

JP was thanked for her work in preparing the reports.

**ACTION: JB to ask JP about the interest on the savings account.**

**ACTION: JB to ask MM to clarify French trip budget**

## **4.2 To review AGM and agree date for 2025 AGM**

It was agreed that the 2023 AGM went well.

Tuesday November 18<sup>th</sup> was agreed as the date for the 2024 AGM.

## **4.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

### **4.3.1. Diversity of Trustees and Chorus and Equalities Officer role**

One member suggested reading out the SPC Diversity Policy at the start of every meeting as in her experience this has proved invaluable in focusing attention on this important issue. All agreed.

It was agreed that an Equalities/Diversity Officer would be an excellent idea, to ensure that the issue remains at the top of the agenda. Accompanying Trustee status is optional: to be discussed with the individual who has volunteered.

**ACTION: AA to approach the volunteer (Boo).**

#### 4.3.2 Recruitment – especially of tenors

It was reported that there are now only 15 tenors after a recent departure. JM has approached the MD with a number of ideas and a way forward is to be clarified. The MD is very much in favour of the Voice Exchange and hopes that this will yield good results.

It was agreed that members of Chamber groups are ideal recruits, but that many are not keen on the large-choir repertoire. A reasonable payment has worked in the past.

It was agreed that the Committee would be willing to pay selected tenors to sing as and when needed and JM is to report this to the MD – especially with the Mozart concerts approaching. JM is to also speak to the Bach Choir/Philip Collin about potential recruits.

**ACTION: JM to report to the MD and speak to Philip Collin.**

#### 4.4 SPC Strategic Plan

It was agreed that there was no need to amend the Strategic Plan and its Vision/Aims following input from Chorus members at the AGM. Feedback generally harmonised with the Plan.

One action point is to make sure the Summer Social event is a success and to make Chorus members aware of post-rehearsal gatherings at a local pub – particularly because of the change of rehearsal venue. There was general enthusiasm for making the Summer Social a more popular event.

It was agreed that the Strategic Plan should be discussed in greater detail at the next meeting ie how to make it work in practice and which elements should be identified as particular priorities.

#### 4.5 Policies – Contracts

4.5.1 AA reported that the MD's contract is being adjusted following his feedback.

##### 4.5.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

AA described a number of updates / amendments which have been made to the Policy to ensure it is consistent with current terminology and thinking. AA offered to circulate the latest Making Music diversity resources as a valuable point of reference.

**ACTION: AA to circulate Making Music Diversity resources.**

**It was agreed that the new Diversity Officer should be given an opportunity to review the Policy before it is formally approved by the Trustees.**

##### 4.5.3 Safeguarding

The Policy to be amended to state that Safeguarding Officer Jim Monach "holds a DBS Advanced Certificate".

#### 4.6 Governance Action Plan

Most items are now complete, other than the Risk Management Policy which is overdue.

### 5 Operations

Learning points from recent concerts were reviewed. The shortage of Christmas concert programmes was discussed and AA said that she has emailed the City Hall but not yet received a response.

It was agreed that every concert should have a programme and that a retrospective programme for the Durufle / Young Composer concert would be created for the benefit of the young composers. JM will investigate costs etc. AA will send JM the Young Composer copy from the City Hall concert and obtain the poster artwork from Alex Burn.

**ACTION: AA to send JM Young Composer copy and poster artwork.**

It was agreed that there must therefore be a programme for the March concert. Steve T offered to write some copy about 'Rejoice in the Lamb' as background information for the Chorus and for inclusion in the programme. He was thanked for this offer.

**ACTION: Steve T to write 'Rejoice in the Lamb' copy**

#### 5.2 Voice Exchange

See above. It was also agreed that Georgina Hulse should contact the Sterndale and Abbeydale Singers, the Sheffield Chamber Choir and to continue discussions with St. Johns, Ranmoor. JS offered to support GH if needed and was thanked for this.

#### 5.3 RPS Inspiration Award

The Committee thanked AA for all her hard work to date. There has been a huge amount of information to supply to support the shortlisting.

It was agreed that the 3 complimentary tickets would go to the MD, AA and Rachel Copley. AA is waiting to hear from the MD whether the rehearsal on the night of the Awards ceremony could be made optional, to enable Chorus members to attend. In fact, there are not many tickets available. It was agreed that there should be a note in the next Update to the effect that a few tickets are available for the Ceremony but that attending will mean missing a rehearsal.

**ACTION: AA to add note as above about the Awards Ceremony to the next Update.**

#### 5.4 New Rehearsal Venue

Everyone felt that the first rehearsal at Birkdale had gone well. There was a minor snag with tall basses standing in the front row – easily remedied.

The issue of chair stacking was discussed and it was agreed that a team of volunteers (tall people) should be convened to do the stacking effectively and safely. JM is to approach suitable candidates.

**ACTION: JM to approach people for chair stacking duties.**

#### 5.5 Marketing and Publicity

AB's two reports were reviewed. AA said she felt that progress should be formally reviewed after 6 months and that there was a need to further formalise the arrangement and the Committee's expectations. It was agreed that results so far are disappointing with little improvement in social media profile etc.

It was agreed that AA would ask AB to specify the number of posts made in her monthly report.

**ACTION: AA to speak to AB about putting more info into her monthly report and about being more proactive.**

#### 5.6 Invitations for SPC and guests to David Clover Festival

**ACTION: AA to RSVP to the effect that Christine Pennington and guest will attend on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> and Jo Briddock and guest on Jan 27<sup>th</sup>.**

### 6 2023 – 2024 Season

#### 6.1– 6.4 The forthcoming season to be discussed by the EPG at its first meeting in January.

AA reported that there has been an email from Sheffield CC to the effect that a delegation from Bochum will be in Sheffield the weekend of the Come and Sing Creation concert (May 4). The Lord Mayor will be attending the concert at 5pm and it was agreed that AA will let Graham know that any Bochum choir members are very welcome to attend the day.

MG offered to liaise with hosts as needed.

6.5 AA reported that the MD is very enthusiastic about the Young Conductor initiative and is currently discussing options with Sheffield University Music Department. A second option if needed will be the RNCM. It was agreed that the MD and the candidate will each receive a fee/bursary of £500.

### 7 Future Projects

7.1 The Bochum choir is very keen for a visit to take place and it was reported that the MD is very keen on the Rutter Gloria recording with the BDB.

7.2 The Chorus is not taking part in the Classical Sheffield Finale this year but will be doing a concert on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March during the Festival.

7.4 The Brigantes approach has not yet yielded a response. MG offered to email her own contact about the possibility of an SPC/Leeds Festival Chorus concert in 2024/25, this to be cc'd to the EPG and the MD. The YouTube channel is still very short of material. How to address this is to be discussed in greater detail at a future meeting.

**ACTION: MG to email her contact at Brigantes about a joint concert.**

### 8 Committee Officer Issues/Reports

#### 8.1 Membership Update

MG reported that the current roll is 154 Chorus members, plus 10 on leave of absence.

Surveys from recent leavers do not give cause for concern and there are no common/recurring threads in any comments.

8.2 No other issues were raised.

**ACTION:** It was agreed that there should be a gift for Kate Reece as retiring Alto Voice Rep.

## **9 AOB**

The Committee expressed thanks to Jenny Swann for standing in for Helen Kirk and Helen presented Jenny with a bouquet.

JB suggested that the Agenda be 'flipped' next time to ensure that there is time to discuss items lower down the running order. It was agreed that this would take place next time, but that the Committee's primary responsibility is for Governance.

It was suggested that more sub-committees would be of value in taking forward projects that shouldn't be the responsibility of the Committee and Trustees. This to be discussed at a future meeting.

*The Committee expressed its thanks to Marianne for hosting the meeting.*

## **ACTION LIST**

From 14.09.22

- ALL to check that they have uploaded to SharePoint their SPC documents which might be valuable to successors or in emergency IN PROGRESS
- Anne A/Jane P to produce a set of Financial Procedures to include how SPC deals with payments to trustees. IN PROGRESS
- Georgina H to consider initial costs and practical details for setting up a youth choir and come back to the Committee with further suggestions. NOT BEING TAKEN FORWARD

**From 08.03.23**

- GH, JS plus Sue Pennington and Helen Eyre to meet to develop a feasibility study re the proposed Yorkshire carol book

**From 17 May 2023**

- JB to feed back to JM that all the proposals in the paper, apart from Bring a Tenor, were approved and so can be taken forward to DB. **DONE**
- JB to set up a working group to take the Assisted Hearing Technologies proposals forward, inviting anyone with an interest to join. **NOT TO BE TAKEN FORWARD.**
- Committee members to send their suggestions for a mission statement to JB.
- JB to finalise the Strategic Planning document and the four aims in preparation for sharing it with members at the next AGM (taking account of comments on p7). **DONE**
- JS to research alternative venues for the recording on 20 Nov 2023 and report back to the committee in due course. **DONE**
- GH to approach Philip Collin with the invitation for St John's choristers to sing the St Nicholas (after checking with Darius) **DONE**
- Event Planning Group to investigate possible non-traditional venues for the Come Sing *Creation* in April 2024. **DONE**
- Event Planning Group to take arrangements for the French trip forward.
- HK to send details of a summer sing in August to AA for inclusion in the Weekly Update. **DONE**
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**From 12 July 2023**

JM to set up a meeting with the MD to fine-tune the strategy concerning tenor numbers. **DONE**

JB to update the vision statement and recirculate to the Committee. Committee members to respond by sending any final/further thoughts to JB. **DONE**

JS to research alternative venues in case Birkdale cannot be used. **DONE**

JB to seek further details about the French trip from Matthew Morgan. **DONE**

JB to convey the Committee's thanks to Nigel. **DONE**

GH to take forward the Voice Exchange initiative. **IN PROGRESS**

AA to communicate the Committee's thanks to Alex Burns. **DONE**

PC to draft copy about male attire that can be included in the Weekly Update in September. **DONE**

JB to write to John Spence and Nigel Wright (re. his work on the Voice Exchange) with the Committee's thanks and to offer both Hon. Membership. **DONE**

MG to convey the positive membership/attendance statistics in her AGM report. **DONE**

### **FROM OCTOBER 18**

AA to amend the Annual Report in line with comments received.

Committee members to email any final comments on the Annual Report to AA ASAP.

Committee members to email to JB any final comments on the Strategic Plan.

AA to add call for volunteer accompanist to the next Update.

Helen Kirk to organise the production of the large posters and make arrangements for the feedback devices (box, paper, pencils etc.)

Patrick Callaghan to collate posts-AGM responses to the Strategic Plan.

HK to organise refreshments for the BDB at the recording session.

MG to create attendance sheet for Mozart Requiem concerts.

JB to prompt MM to provide more info about the French trip.

AA to contact Sheffield universities about the Young Conductor initiative.

JB to communicate the Committee's thanks to AB.

AA to inform Alex Burns of the 'Cultural Update' bulletin.

MG to feed back to Kate Reece and the volunteer replacement.

### **FROM JANUARY 2024**

AA to resolve Charity Commission anomaly and upload annual report JB to approach Jane Parkin.

ACTION: JB to confirm date for next EPG meeting.

ACTION: JB to ask JP about the interest on the savings account.

ACTION: JB to ask MM to clarify French trip budget

ACTION: JM to report to the MD and speak to Philip Collin.



ACTION: AA to speak to AB about putting more info into her monthly report and about being more proactive.

ACTION: MG to email her contact at Brigantes about a joint concert.