

Wed 15 May 2024 7pm – 10.10pm

Present: Alan Anderson, Anne Adams, Jo Briddock (Chair), Patrick Callaghan, Georgina Hulse, Marianne Grayson, Helen Kirk, Jim Monach, Christine Pennington, Boo Spurgeon (first part of meeting), Jenny Swann, Steve Terry (Vice Chair), Kathy Towers (minutes), Sally Turnbull (part of meeting)

Apologies: Paul Duffield

MINUTES

1 Apologies and reading of Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2 Declaration of any conflicts of interest

There were none.

3 3.1 Minutes of meeting held on 13 March 2024 were approved as a true record.

3.2 Matters Arising

Actions from previous meeting

AA reported on the EPG meeting held 15/5. It was agreed that future meetings should have a single item agenda to enable the group to focus on the task allocated them by trustees, ie to flesh out ideas for making self-funded concerts more popular and financially successful.

SPC Friends: currently in hand with KT who has started her initial research.

Risk management: AA repeated that this is now urgent as it is over a year out of date. Date for a sub-group meeting to be agreed.

ACTION: AA and JB etc agree a date for an urgent meeting to discuss this issue.

NOTE: EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY (ITEM 4.2.) WAS ADDRESSED AS THE NEXT ITEM OF THE MEETING TO ENABLE BOO SPURGEON (JOINING VIA ZOOM) TO REPORT ON HER WORK TO DATE.

4 Governance

4.1 Finance

4.1.1 The Crystal report and Financial report were approved.

JP reported on recent activities. The St Mark's concert was profitable but the Victoria Hall concert was not. There is a refund pending from Faber Music. The finances of the Come and Sing event look good. There was discussion of a bonus for Neil the organist and the MD to reflect their hard work on the day. An extra payment of £50 for each was agreed.

ACTION: Jo B agreed to write to each and cc JP so she can arrange payment.

The MD had queried the figures associated with the French trip but these have now been clarified (see below).

Mozart concerts: the cost of the coaches is much more expensive (£4,500) than expected because of extra pick-ups and having to find a new coach company at a late stage. AA was thanked for all her hard work on this which is not within the remit of Administrator.

4.1.2 Budgets

- 2023-24 budget (see 2023-24 Budget spreadsheet)
- 2022-2025 (3 year) budget

The Committee approved the Budgets with one correction.

JP reported that SPC is losing money at a rate of apx £3K per annum. Although the reserve is currently substantial, she emphasised the need to be mindful of this because of the long-term implications. She suggested that in future it might be advisable to ensure that annual subs increases are at the same % level as increases in fees to the MD etc. (which is not what happened this year). She pointed out that a recent period without increases has also contributed to the shortfall.

JP was thanked for her hard work.

4.2 Equality Diversity and Inclusion, including recruitment and retention

4.2.1 Recruitment especially of tenors

MD said there were no significant developments to report but added that tenor numbers are increasing steadily. Three new tenors are joining the Chorus for the Mozart concerts via the Exchange scheme. MG reported that all the Sheffield chamber choirs are interested in this and want to keep receiving info. (This under 5.2)

4.2.2 Diversity survey

BS reported on progress in researching and drafting the survey, and thanked MG for her support and input. MG reported that the MD is very supportive of the survey and interested in the results, particularly in areas relating to socio-economic groups. The MD has also suggested an additional question, asking about the decade in which the respondent joined the Chorus.

BS emphasised the importance of maximising access to the survey and there was discussion of how best to deliver the survey (eg online and/or paper versions).

There was also discussion of whether to combine the EDI survey with the member survey which covers questions of repertoire etc. It was decided to keep the two separate, with the EDI survey being embedded as a link on the subs form, so it is completed annually. The form will also include a note letting members know that they can request a paper version.

The member survey will take place in January each year (and will include questions relating to repertoire and other membership-related matters).

BS reported that the questions within the ethnicity section of the survey are derived from surveys carried out by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). It was agreed that this question will ask about five broad categories, with an opportunity for respondents to provide additional information if they wish.

Boo was thanked by the Committee for her research and hard work so far.

To facilitate speedy collection of subs and timely completion of the EDI survey it was agreed that it would be helpful to move the date of the AGM to September. This change was approved by the Committee and all felt that it would yield several benefits for the running of the Chorus, as well as for members.

ACTION: MG to prepare a survey seeking member input re. repertoire.

ACTION: AA to bring forward preparations for the AGM to enable the new earlier date, and include on the Agenda the change to the Constitution as agreed in item 4.4.2.

Wider diversity lessons

AA provided input from a recent meeting of the Sheffield Cultural Group where inclusion of minority communities had been discussed. The SCG felt strongly that collaborations were important as a way forward and there are recent examples of successful initiatives along these lines.

JM commented on the striking diversity of the audience at a recent Brigantes concert and felt the SPC might be able to learn useful lessons from this.

4.3 SPC Strategic Plan and Governance Action Plan

See below (EPG reports item)

4.4 Policies

4.4.1 Risk Management Policy

Review and approval was deferred until after the next Committee meeting, when JB, AA and PC will have held their own meeting to finalise the policy.

4.4.2 Chorus Rules

The Committee reviewed the paper with suggestions for various updates to Chorus rules.

ACTION: AA to make the agreed amends and upload the new version to Sharepoint and the Chorus website.

Payment of subs

Changes to the date when subs become due and to the length of the deadline were covered in item 4.2.2 above. It was agreed that giving members eight months to pay subs (or make an arrangement to do so) does not help to focus minds.

ACTION: JB volunteered to contact members who still haven't paid and remind them of the current Chorus rules.

ACTION: JP providing JB with a list of names.

JM suggested a penalty (such as a higher fee) for late payers. However, these membership terms are part of the Constitution so would need to be changed at an AGM.

The Committee agreed to introduce a quicker/shorter deadline eg January 1st which was thought to be a more easily memorable date. Warning letter(s) will be issued so no one can plead ignorance! Reminders will also be added to the Update.

Auditions and re-auditions.

ACTION: AA to change 'immediately' to 'within 48 hours' on the website in the sentence about the wait before audition results are passed on to the auditionee.

4.5 Trustee structure

The Committee discussed briefly the possibility of setting up additional sub-Committees such as a repertoire committee (suggested by MG). This idea will be discussed again when the next members' survey has been carried out and the results collated.

4.6 Governance Action Plan (see paper)

Progress was discussed and the colour-coded document reviewed.

AA explained that the red/amber/green system has been applied to indicate which actions are most urgent and likely to need attention at imminent meetings.

Actions from the Strategic Plan marked yellow had not yet been assigned to anyone. MG said her name can be put alongside points 42 and 43 as these are membership issues.

Point 47: Committee members were encouraged to reflect on ideas to maximise Chorus members' participation in every concert.

Kirsty is now marketing officer but has opted not to be a Trustee.

Point 50: Making Music Award for a new composition. It was agreed that Rachel Fright's piece for the Stella Jockel Young Composer competition would be ideal for this category, as it can only be entered this year. This would be carried out without Rachel's knowledge.

ACTION: KT to ask Rachel for her own recording (by email) as a recording is required for the submission.

ACTION: JM to investigate what other information is required and to collate MD's and other judges' notes/comments for the submission.

It was suggested that it would be a positive to have a reviewer for as many future concerts as possible so that these could be submitted to local press, Yorkshire Post etc. SPC currently gets very few reviews.

ACTION: ST to ask for potential candidates via the Hallam Journalism course. Comp tickets would be a carrot.

ACTION: JM also suggested Paul Allen (ex Kaleidoscope R4). Comp tickets would again be offered.

Point 63 is in hand.

5 Operations

5.1 There was a brief review of the Come and Sing to glean learning points.

It was agreed that the event was a great success in every area. The MD clearly enjoyed it and visitors were thrilled and said it compared v favourably with Come and Sings elsewhere. It was agreed that there is potential to recruit many more participants in future (and so boost Chorus funds further!) Five visitors have been in touch about potentially joining SPC.

It was agreed that in future participants should be asked for their voice parts in advance. There were also timing issues which meant that breaks couldn't always happen as planned. The emphasis on 'singing with the amazing SPC under our permanent MD' was a good focus as this is not the case with all Come and Sings. It was good to see so many relatives of SPC members joining in.

It was agreed that requests to mail out scores could not be met, but it should be possible to send links to free downloadable scores / Choraline etc.

At the event AA told Nik Hamilton from the Council that the Chorus could be regarded as 'Sheffield's choir' by the Council. She encouraged other Committee members to advocate in a similar way whenever possible.

The Committee made a vote of thanks to Kirsty Christer for her hard work in helping make the event so successful and for putting it on the Come & Sing website.

5.2 Voice Exchange

There was a brief update (see above).

Change of rehearsal venue

The Checklist was approved and this should be used at all visits to potential venues to facilitate comparisons.

Progress update:

JM reported that St Andrews is avail on a Tues but needs a full visit.

ACTION: GH to visit St Mary's Bramall Lane and Bent's Green Methodist Church.

ACTION: Trustees to check out venues local to them using the checklist and report back.

5.3 Marketing and Publicity Update

Kirsty Christer has taken on the marketing officer role and is being paid as agreed. She is currently working on the 2025 marketing plan – marketing the season and marketing the Chorus as a choir to join.

ACTION: GH volunteered to talk to Kirsty about Canva as a software for producing high quality materials.

6 2023-24 season: progress reports from the EPG

6.1 Mozart *Requiem* London, Sheff (SICS) Edinburgh (IMG funded)

Points in turquoise on the report are those needing attention. Tenor numbers looking good for each venue.

The stair climber is needed for the Sheffield concert. JM only has two volunteers – more than this are needed and any additional ones will need to be trained. Training is in hand.

The BBC recording is exciting news. The BBC will record the Sheffield rehearsal on June 4 and the Cadogan Hall rehearsal. The BBC is looking for four interviewees – one from each part. Names TBC but the MD has suggested ST as the bass candidate. Izzie Rider was suggested as the alto.

ACTION: MG to remind the MD that June 4 can't now be a half rehearsal.

It was decided that a Friends event will not be organised for this concert.

6.2 11 - 17 Jul Trip to France

The dress code is relaxed: women to be reminded that there is no need for long skirt or sashes. All black. Short sleeve shirts for men. No other rules.

Alan A said that the scores are ready, as he has received a full list from the MD of what is being sung.

Costs and fees

The MD fee and cost of UK rehearsals is closer to £3K, which is higher than originally calculated. Chorus members have already agreed to contribute £40 each but the revised cost works out at £80 apx per person.

ACTION: JP to calculate exact cost when she has all the latest figures.

ACTION: MG TO email participants to inform them that costs have risen and asking if people can contribute more to reflect this. This will be included in the email about rehearsals.

ACTION: MG to ask Matthew Morgan for a list of people who have already contributed £40 and to request that he doesn't send any further communications about money until the current situation is clarified.

ACTION: KT to send MG potential wording.

Important Note: it was agreed that it is not appropriate for Matthew Morgan to handle the finances, as it is easy for confusion to arise. In future, SPC should look after travel and all other costs for reasons of transparency.

6.3 23-24 Young Conductor Sponsorship

Deferred until next meeting.

7 2024-25 season: Updates from Event Planning Group (EPG)

Deferred until next meeting.

7.1 Fri 15 Nov 2024, City Hall SICS - Lily Boulanger piece

7.2 Sat 14 Dec 2024, Christmas Carol Concert at City Hall SICS

7.3 Sun 23 Mar 2025, final concert Classical Sheffield Festival Weekend, Young Composer Competition winner(s), two new works commissioned by Stephen Johnson, Faure *Requiem* (self-funded, part-sponsored by Stephen Johnson)

7.4 April/May 2025 – MD suggests another Come and Sing – non-trad venue? Needs to be as profitable as possible as rest of season will make a loss

7.5 Sun 8 Jun 2025 City Hall SICS – Haydn *Creation* Halle.

7.6 Stella Jockel Young Composer Competition 2025 (funded from legacy)

8 Future Projects

Deferred until next meeting.

8.1 Concerts – E Smythe Mass with Brigantes, Rutter *Gloria* with BDB, annual targets (one non-traditional community or venue, two works by females, one by composer from under-represented group)

8.2 Other projects - Bochum trip, YouTube channel, new banners.

9 Committee Officer issues/reports

MG provided a brief update and reported that one bass has resigned. There are plenty of auditions in the pipeline.

9.1 Summer Social: 13th August, 6.30pm start.

This will be a bring and share food/drinks events with added singing.

HK reported that the Chorus has been offered use of Charlotte Liu's (soprano) garden which has a useful polytunnel in case of rain. All agreed that this is an ideal solution and that the Committee is very grateful to Charlotte for her offer.

9.2 Issues raised by other officers

None were raised.

10 Any other business

Nothing was raised.

Date of Trustee meetings: 9 Jul 24 (new date), 9 Oct 24, 6 Nov 24

Items for future agenda:

YouTube channel, new CD, new banners

ACTION LIST

From 8 March 2023

- **GH and JS** plus Sue Pennington and Helen Eyre to meet to develop a feasibility study re the proposed book of the MD's arrangements.

From 10 January 2024

- **EPG** to flesh out ideas for making self-funded concerts more popular and financially successful (eg concert with youth choir, twinning with school or youth choir, video game music) also meeting SPC's aims of inclusiveness and diversity **IN PROGRESS**
- **JM** to investigate Making Music Awards **IN PROGRESS**

From 13th March 2024

- ~~AA to check the latest version of the inclusion and diversity policy is on Sharepoint. DONE, also on website in Members Area~~
- ~~KT to investigate expanding the SPC Friends programme~~ **IN PROGRESS**
- ~~AA to send KT any info she has.~~
- ~~JB, AA and PC to meet to finalise the risk management policy as a matter of priority.~~
- ~~BS and MG to organise to survey the chorus re diversity eg via Survey Monkey~~ **IN PROGRESS**
- ~~MG to take forward the voice exchange initiative as detailed in the governance action plan. DONE~~
- ~~AA to create checklist for new venues to be formalised. DONE~~
- People responsible for evaluating each new venue to be allocated **IN PROGRESS**
- AA to prepare paperwork for next Young Composer competition. **IN PROGRESS**

- JM to request a meeting with Birkdale deputy head/head via his contact Michelle. JM to attend this with AA. **DONE but no meeting agreed**
- AA to confirm to Kirsty Christer that the role is a paid one. The existing contract can be shared with her. **DONE**
- JM to liaise with MD to make necessary arrangements for vic hall concert. **DONE**
- Outstanding performer contract to be signed for Vic hall concert – Shaun Brines. AA to expedite. **DONE**
- AA to circulate details of Mozart mini tour as soon as these become available. **DONE**
- HK to investigate and take forward possibility of an autumn Ceilidh. HK IS LOOKING INTO VENUES AND IDEAS. CROOKES SOCIAL CLUB MOOTED AS POSSIBLE VENUE?
- MG to ask Cath Eadon if she is able/willing to upload selected soundfiles to the Youtube channel. MG HAS ASKED MATTHEW FOR SOUND FILES TO UPLOAD.
- MG to offer honorary membership to departing member Malcolm Johnson. **DONE**
- AA to ask Silver Plate (college restaurant) for potential dates for 2025 for President's Dinner. **IN PROGRESS**

From 15 May 2024

- AA and JB etc agree a date for an urgent meeting to discuss this issue.
- Jo B to write to each and cc JP so she can arrange payment.
- MG to prepare a survey seeking member input re repertoire
- AA to bring forward preparations for the AGM to enable the new earlier date, and include on the agenda the change to the Constitution as agreed in Item 4.4.2
- AA to make the agreed amendments and upload the new version onto Sharepoint and the Chorus website
- JB to contact members who still haven't paid and remind them of the current Chorus rules.
- JP to provide JB with a list of names.
- AA to change 'immediately' to 'within 48 hours' on the website in the sentence about the wait before audition results are passed on to the auditionee.
- KT to ask Rachel for her own recording (by email) as a recording is required for the submission. **DONE**
- JM to investigate what other information is required and to collate MD's and other judges' notes/comments for the submission.
- ST to ask for potential candidates via the Hallam Journalism course. Comp tickets would be a carrot.
- JM also suggested Paul Allen (ex Kaleidoscope R4) and will contact him. Comp tickets would be offered.
- GH to check out St Mary's Bramall Lane and Bent's Green Methodist Church.
- Trustees to check out venues local to them using the checklist and report back
- GH to talk to Kirsty about Canva as a software for producing high quality materials.
- MG to remind the MD that June 4 can't now be a half rehearsal.

- JP to calculate exact cost when she has all the latest figures.
- MG TO email participants to inform them that costs have risen and asking if people can contribute more to reflect this. This will be included in the email about rehearsals.
- MG to ask Matthew Morgan for a list of people who have already contributed £40 and to request that he doesn't send any further communications about money until the current situation is clarified.
- KT to send MG potential wording. DONE