

MACCLESFIELD MALE VOICE CHOIR

Minutes of the General Committee Meeting

17th June 2021 @ 7:30pm via Zoom (On-line)

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 7:33pm.

1. **Present:** Harry Newton (Chairman), John Robinson (Vice Chairman), Bob Jenner (Treasurer), Robert Owens (Director of Music), Bryan Peak (T2 Rep), Mike Batson (B1 Rep), Keith Jones, Neil McArthur.
2. **Apologies for Absence:** Graham Waters (Secretary), David Collins (T1 Rep), John Powell (B2 Rep).
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting:** Proposed as a correct record by Keith Jones, seconded by John Robinson and approved by all present.
4. **Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting:**

AGM 2021 – Setting the date for the 2021 AGM is deferred until COVID-19 regulations allow a gathering of members at a suitable venue.

Old Uniforms – It was agreed that, consistent with the choir rules, members who leave the choir shall be asked to return their blazer *and any other items of uniform provided by the choir.* (Text in italics TBC, n.b. wording in the rules only mentions blazers). It was proposed that, when new choir “uniforms” are provided to members, the returned blazer could be offered to other appropriate charities, possibly for a small donation to Macc MVC. The practicality of this proposal will be investigated by the Uniform Committee.

5. **Financial update from the Treasurer:** The Treasurer submitted the following update;

Operating Cash - As at 12th May 2021 the bank balance was £13,615.62. This balance includes ring-fenced funds for a) Uniform Fund £8,000, b) Cornwall deposits £300 and c) prepaid subscriptions £250. Excluding the ring-fenced funds and with no major commitments anticipated in the rest of the month, the Operating Cash Balance at the end of June 2021 will be **circa £5,000**.

The Treasurer informed the Committee that he had approached several potential funding agencies for financial support without success. In a number of cases the funding agencies indicated a preference to support specific development / improvement projects rather than contribute to general running costs.

Uniform Project – It was agreed with the Treasurer that the preferred supplier (Slaters) should be contacted i) to confirm the service and costs discussed before the pandemic lock-down and ii) to finalise the process for measuring choir members as soon as social distancing restrictions allowed, ideally to commence in early September. The Treasurer reported that contacts at the Macclesfield Town Council and National Lottery are being updated on progress, and that he may require to co-opt additional members to assist with the Uniform Project in due course.

Web Hosting – The Treasurer confirmed that he had settled the outstanding balance of £54 with Ionos, the Web Hosting provider for the old choir website, and the service had been terminated. The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his kind offer to fund this payment.

It was generally agreed that wherever possible such commercial relationships should be set-up directly between the Choir and the supplier / provider.

Full-Year Forecast & Membership Subscription – The Treasurer identified that to continue in operation the Choir needed to cover expenses to the end of February 2022, at which point subscriptions would be received for that calendar year. Given the current Operating Cash Balance, in order to continue with 2 rehearsals per week (which is currently particularly important as each rehearsal is restricted to 20 singers) a subscription for calendar year 2021 of at least £130 per member is urgently required. Concern was raised

over the uncertainty around such things as concert cancellation, additional venue operating costs and it was generally agreed that that an additional buffer reserve should be created. Therefore, it was generally agreed that the subscription for the calendar year 2021 should be £150. The Committee requested NM to draft an explanation for circulation to the members outlining the activity and issues supporting this request to accompany the subscription request.

6. **Strategy Group Report – Keith Jones:**

Future Strategy - Work continues on forging a new relationship with the Council, it is hoped that the Mayor will attend the Welcome Back Concert and it is proposed to raise the possibility of a choir social event at the Town Hall in August. Planning work has started on the next three events.

Communication Process - The Group has continued to publicise up-coming events via email and social media. The communication stream is being used to recruit new members. The Group has also produced a press release for use in response to the event of any challenging press coverage. The Press Release comprises a comprehensive justification of the recommencement of rehearsals, including mention of Trading Standards Office approval,.

Recruitment - Plans are well advanced for the Open Singing Day. Laurie Kennard and Dai Jones are focussed on spreading the word across social and local media about the need for new recruits.

IT / Website - Feedback on the new website has been good. A lot of public interest has been registered via the website for the upcoming events. The restructured Sound Cloud system will be activated soon after completion of the transfer of information from the old system.

Uncertainties - The Group feels that the accelerated spread of the new Delta COVID-19 variant has significantly increased the level uncertainty relating to staging events. Contingency planning for the upcoming events has been discussed as follows:-

i) Welcome Back Concert - The Group feels that a performance must go ahead for this event, even if it has to be delayed or possibly takes place on-line.

ii) Open Singing Day - In the event of increased restriction this event should be postponed until a later date.

iii) Jess Gillam Concert – When considering rescheduling / cancellation the Group feels that, in addition to government restrictions, the financial impact and reputational (Choir public image) implications must be considered.

7. **Events:**

June & July - The Committee reviewed the proposed event schedule in June and July in the light of the four-week delay in moving out of COVID-19 Roadmap Step 3, particularly in relation to timing and the chance of limitations on the lifting of Step 3 restrictions.

The Director of Music updated the Committee on the complexity and extended lead-time in preparing a Risk Assessment for choral singing at a venue, and the fact that it could only be completed after the venue operators undertaking the time-consuming process of preparing or modifying their own risk assessment.

The Committee agreed that;

1) the Welcome Back Concert would be delayed until after the lifting of Step 3 restrictions in July

2) the Open Singing Day should be rescheduled to a date around two weeks after the Welcome Back Concert. *HN to inform the Church.*

3) disappointingly for the Jess Gillam Concert, the revised earliest date for HMG removing some / all Step 3 restrictions was too close to the planned concert date for all the necessary preparation to be completed. Hence, the financial / reputational risk was too great for the Choir and the concert should be cancelled. The Director of Music advised the Committee that it was unlikely that Jess Gillam would be available to perform in 2021, however he was hopeful that a concert could be arranged in 2022.

4) In view of the cancelation of the Jess Gillam concert it is proposed to move the Welcome Back Concert to 24th July in St Michaels and All Angels Church, Macclesfield.

5) Consistent with point 2) above it is proposed to hold the Open Singing Day at Macclesfield Methodist Church on 7th August 2021. *HN to find out if the church is available. RO to inform BackBeat A Cappella.*

6) *RO to amend the Macc MVC website events section with the changes, and trigger notification of those who have indicated an interest.*

7) *KJ to request Laurie Kennard to draft a communication to the Choir of the proposed event changes for the next Strategy Committee meeting.*

Llandudno – The Director of Music informed the committee that the Choir had been invited to perform in Llandudno on Saturday 14th August 2021 which received unanimous approval.

8. **Section Representatives' Reports:** **T1** - Nothing to Report, **T2** -Nothing to Report, **B1** -A recruit had attended a recent rehearsal, **B2**- Nothing to Report.

9. **AOB:**

Minutes on Website – it was agreed the Choir Committee minutes should accessible be in the secure Members are of the website.

Website Members Section Security – *it was agreed that the password for the members section should be changed every 6 months, GW / RO to action.*

Boys Choir – The Director of Music informed the Committee of the success and benefits experienced by other male voice choirs from supporting a Boys Choir operating under their banner. In addition to the recognised benefits to the boys, the inclusion of a performance by the Boys Choir in selected concerts widens the potential audience, thus increasing attendance at future events. The creation of a Boys Choir also strengthens community ties for the whole choir. *The Committee agreed that RO should investigate the proposal in detail, identifying the benefits, cost, opportunities, and risks.*

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 14th July at 7:30pm. The Chairman gave his apologies; the Vice-Chairman to Chair.

Close: The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 21:25.