



indebted we are to Cheltenham Borough Council for its agreement to carry forward the annual grant so that we are not out of pocket.

4.2 The Dance report was read by Julia Davies and described the enthusiasm and excitement shown by the competitors, all eager to get back on the stage.

‘The Dance Section had a really successful year and overall the number of entries was back to pre-covid levels. One of the areas where entries were lower were the 5/6 and 7/8 year classes. It was felt these children were quite badly affected during periods of lockdown and did not cope well with on-line and Zoom dance classes. Entries from primary schools classes were down reflecting the problems particularly state schools are having with time and funds.’

‘We did have 2 entries for the Patricia Mace Pas de Deux class and our thanks go, as ever, to Patricia for her continued support and sponsorship of this class.’

‘Overall, the standard of performance was very high and again the quality of the group performances was excellent: entertainment of a professional standard. Congratulations to both dancers and teachers for this wonderful standard of work.’

‘Regardless of Brian Harding’s valiant efforts there were some competitors who failed to submit their licence forms on time and Gloucestershire County Council would not allow them to perform during school times. To enable these children to dance we arranged out of school time classes. The children danced only for a mark and an adjudication and not a place. Our efforts were appreciated by all concerned. However, we have decided not to do the same this year as it was agreed by the Dance committee and teachers that children should not dance out of section.’

‘The bureaucracy of the County Council on licencing continues and we wish to thank Brian for the endless hours he put in to satisfy their demands. We understand the licensing rules may be changing again, but not in time for our 2023 Festival.’

4.3 The Music report was delivered by David Terry. In his report, David drew comparisons with previous Festival:

‘In 2022 there were fewer school choirs than pre-covid, which had been expected because schools had not been rehearsing choirs as normal. Vocals and wind entries were slightly fewer, too, as schools caught up on academic subjects. String entries however were strong with a full day of classes. Piano classes recovered strongly and Choral day had a huge entry.’

David thanked all the members of the Music team for their endless cheerfulness, dedication, and hard work.

‘After becoming Piano Secretary in 2013 Sally-Anne is now retiring. We all owe her much thanks for modernising the syllabus, bringing piano teachers into the festival process and above all for organising and running piano days with dedication, control, fairness, calmness. Sally-Anne has been an inspiration - providing lots of fun, generosity, humour and guidance. We’ll miss her very much.’

We now have two new piano secretaries who have already been hard at work planning this year's festival. Penny Liddiard and Phillippa Harrison are sharing the role of Piano Secretary, having both experience of the festival, professional teaching and piano teaching.

David expressed his sincere thanks to all the stewards and volunteers for their dedication to the spirit of the festival and making it a great success, to front desk, to announcers, adjudicator stewards, and door stewards. He also thanked Judy and Karen in the trophies and class folders office for their tireless work, resourcefulness, and good humour through the festival, and Ailsa and George Howarth for their organisation and admin of the Nutland Young Musician competition.

4.4 In Rebecca Vines' absence, the Drama report was read by Janice Keen.

'2022 saw some super performances in the Speech & Drama section of the Festival, and some new innovations - such as holding the Lyric Championship in the Main Hall at the close of our section - worked well and will be repeated in 2023.'

'S&D entries hit just over 900 in 2023, which is not just up on 2022, but also up from the abandoned Covid Festival of 2020. This is hugely encouraging, and we are delighted to be hosting 67 different schools in the Speech & Drama classes – a testament to the reach and reputation of the Festival.'

'Entries are particularly strong in the younger years as we offer new classes across a range of disciplines: most specifically in terms of digital output, such as TikTok and creating Short Films. These classes are designed to appeal to a wider range of creatives, such as those who enjoy the 'offstage' roles. They also offer those who wish to participate, but would prefer not to attend in person, to be a part of the Festival. Following on from many successful years of group performances, we are delighted to have so many entries in our Open Access class for individual and duo performances this year.'

'Our adjudicators this year are all good friends to Cheltenham. Cally Foster will begin the Festival, and will be joined halfway through the week by Vivienne Redford. Marcia Carr will close out the week, focusing primarily on Musical Theatre and group work. Marcia visited Cheltenham for the first time in 2022 and was an instant hit. Rebecca Thompson will adjudicate our Own Choice and digital classes, and these results will once again be released online in accordance with our desire to become more inclusive and to offer a range of different channels to access the Festival.'

4.5 In her Stewards' Co-ordinator's report Frances Watson said how good it was to be back at the Town Hall for the Festival in 2023.

'Of the overall number of 75 volunteers on the list, 40 were able to fill the various roles of stewards. We welcomed three new stewards last year and they fitted in very well. Since the end of the Festival, five new recruits have applied to become volunteers and I look forward to them joining us this year. I am hopeful that more from the overall list of volunteers will feel confident enough to return to stewarding.'

Frances reported that the online booking system, enabling volunteers to select the days, classes and duties that suit them, seemed to work well and will be used again this year.

A select group of stewards and friends of the festival attended a coffee morning in October at Christ Church and another is planned – the Tea @ Three on Saturday 22 April.

There were no questions from the meeting about any of the reports. However, Alex Chalk addressed the meeting to congratulate everyone involved on the extraordinary efforts made to stage the Festival. He reminded everyone that events, such as the Festival, have a 'generational' impact on the local society and he was proud of Cheltenham's record in running the Performing Arts Festival for nearly a hundred years! His comments were greeted with approval and a round of applause.

## **5. Treasurer's Report** (Full report held on file)

The Treasurer, Duncan Hooper, Allan Gillespie for his outstanding contribution to the Festival over many years, and also, for providing so much help and assistance in handing over the post of Treasurer in September 2022.

'The accounts for the financial year ending on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022, show that the income from entrants doubled from the previous year as we emerged from the after-effects of Covid. Even so, the number of entrants is still down on pre-Covid levels, possibly due to onerous Child Licencing arrangements, and we were unable to balance the income from entrants and spectators to the cost of hiring the Town Hall. Overall, the Festival lost £5,819.'

'To try to balance the books, this year, we have taken two days off the hire period, at a saving of approximately £6,000 to avoid under-utilisation of the Town Hall. We have also increased the entry fees by approximately 20%, so that the basic entry fee has risen from £5 to £6. This year we have approximately the same number of entrants as last year, and the increase in income will be around 20%, i.e. between £2,500 and £3,000.'

'We changed our bank in the summer of 2022, from Barclays to Lloyds and as a result, we have been asking our Festival Friends to alter their direct debit arrangements. Inevitably, a number have not replied, have not been contactable, or have decided not to continue. Our income from Friends is therefore expected to fall this year.'

'The largest income, of £20,000, for the Festival was the Community Grant from Cheltenham Borough Council. We continue to be indebted to the Council for continuing to support the Performing Arts Festival. We could not continue to operate as we do without their assistance.'

'Our reserves continue to be in a healthy state. Our aim this year is to break even or better, and we have taken significant steps this year towards that aim.'

In response to a question, the Treasurer explained that Gift Aid was not claimed back last year due to complications over Corporation Tax. Instead, the unclaimed Gift Aid will be claimed this year in arrears.

## **6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner**

The meeting was asked to vote on the Executive Committee's proposal '*that Matthew Bennet be appointed as the Independent Examiner for the next year*'. The proposal was unanimously passed.

## **7. Appointment of Trustees**

The Hon Secretary explained that, in accordance with paragraph 14 of the Constitution, at this AGM five charity trustees must retire from office. The charity trustees retiring at this AGM are: Allan Gillespie, Janice Keen, Rebecca Vines, Fiona Crouch, and Duncan Hooper. All have expressed their willingness to stand for reappointment.

The Chairman suggested that, since there were no other nominations, the meeting should be asked to accept all five nominations. This was agreed and passed unanimously by a show of hands.

## **8. Presentations**

The Chairman informed the meeting that this year, no presentations have been planned for the AGM.

## **9. Festival 2023**

There was a general discussion on the current preparations for the 2023 May Festival. Brian informed the meeting that all the preparations are well in hand:

‘The on-line entry system had opened as planned in December and well over 2000 entries have been received. The Town Hall and the adjudicators have all been booked. The programme of events, class times with performer’s names, and advice about the need for parents to consider whether their children require a child performance licence, have been posted on the website.’

‘Last year’s cup and trophy winners were now being reminded to return their cups and detailed planning meetings with the Town Hall management are now being arranged.’

## **10. AOB**

Before the Chairman closed the meeting, Rod Davis called for a vote of thanks to the members of the organising committees for all their hard work in arriving at this stage of preparation. This was supported by a round of applause.

There being no other business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting, thanked all the committee members and supporters for their work and support, and the meeting closed at 11:40 am.

### **In Attendance**

Brian Harding  
Jean Harding  
Frances Watson  
Penny Liddiard  
Sylvia Fry  
Julia Davies  
Neil McDowall  
Carol McDowall  
Pat Amphlett  
Margaret Craven  
Belinda Ricketts

### **Apologies Received for Absence**

Diggory Seacome  
Rebecca Vines  
Rachel Cottell  
Anne McAndrew  
Caroline Sparkes  
Liz Horder  
Pat Di Mambro  
Catriona Murray  
Deborah Henley  
Sophie Hughes  
Corraine Collins

Vivian Barr  
David Terry  
Martin Harris  
Jane Jones  
Helen McNaught  
Janice Keen  
Janina Langdon  
Cecil Sanderson  
Jonathan Dyer  
Allan Gillespie  
Judy Kelly  
Duncan Hooper  
Garth Barnes  
Alex Chalk  
John Keen  
Pat Hemming  
Fiona Crouch  
John Rawson  
Rod Davis

Alyona Saldanha  
Fiona Brown  
Mary Hemming  
Mary Ham  
Whanita La Bouchardiere  
Patricia Mace  
Megan Hozier  
Bernard Stradling  
Chris Marshall  
Sally-Anne Davies  
Anne McAndrew  
Margaret Richards  
Adrienne Fry  
Andrea Reid  
Rob Reid  
Karen Gillespie  
Fiona Wild  
John Pannett  
Heather Pannett  
Tina Rodger  
Janet Marshall