

MINUTES OF AGM OF THE HASLEMERE PLAYERS
Held on Tuesday 18 August 2020
VIA ZOOM

Hamish welcomed 26 members to the meeting. This AGM is being held virtually by Zoom in accordance with Government rules.

1.APOLOGIES:

Maureen Shepherd, Mary Coyte, Val and Derek Bishop, Rae Boxall, Doreen Wylde, Arabella Burwood, David Fear, Elizabeth Chester, Mary Kirkman

2.MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING, which had been displayed on Players' website and were taken as a true record of that meeting and duly approved by Hamish (President) and Pamela (Secretary). It was agreed that the Minutes and Statement of Accounts should be available a week before the meeting.

3. MATTERS ARISING AND CORRESPONDENCE: Nothing relevant to report.

4.TREASURER'S REPORT:

Vicki Gavin presented her report and commenced by saying that the year had certainly been an interesting one, for reasons that nobody could ever have predicted!

Vicki said that as it was a Zoom meeting, she would keep her report brief but was happy to answer any questions relating to the accounts.

She started by looking at the overall result for the year which showed a surplus of £8,407 which was, in part, due to a grant of £10,000 received from Waverley Borough Council to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. She mentioned that our financial year runs from 1 May to 30 April, so the first show in the year under review was Show Stoppers, An Evening of Love, directed by Lucinda Loveland. The show was a good start to the year financially, making a surplus of £935. 16 fewer tickets were sold than for the previous year but at a slightly higher average price and the programme and audience supper costs were reduced.

The October production was Evita, directed by Adrian Stent. Vicki was sure that Chris would have much to say in his speech about the ground breaking nature of the show so Vicki did not want to labour the point. Suffice it to say, it was on another level in almost every way. We had excellent ticket sales, generating revenue of £21,470 but the nature of the show, meant there were significant costs to absorb. Adrian as director and Sally as production manager had their work cut out managing the extensive lighting and, in particular, sound requirements. Particular thanks must go to Gerry Franke for supplying the additional AV and sound equipment which enabled such an outstanding production to be delivered. To put this in perspective, the value of the equipment supplied was over £54,000 and would have cost around £10,000 to hire. Vicki thanked everyone's hard work with the show generating a surplus of £482. This was a great result when just a couple of months before the show, it was thought there would be a loss of three times that amount.

Vicki also expressed thanks to Mary-Lou and all those that help out at the studio. Their contribution, not only helps to control the wardrobe costs for Players' shows but also, despite the pandemic, generated revenue of £1,525 this year.

As everyone was aware, the tough, but necessary, decision, was made to postpone the March production of Legally Blonde and this is currently due to take place at the end of March 2021. Vicki said that all costs could have been moved to the next financial year when the associated revenue would be received. However, it was felt that the prudent approach was to include those costs which are likely to be repeated in the current year's accounts. These include rehearsal venue costs and accompanist's fees, marketing costs, as material will need to be reprinted, and some scenery costs as a precaution in case items already built, deteriorate over the winter. She said it had to be remembered, that these things are usually built to last a few weeks, not a year! A total of £4,064 of costs has gone in to this year's accounts.

Vicki continued that looking at general income and expenditure £2,957 was received in patron and member subs and gift aid. Whilst her view is that being a member of a society is about more than being on stage and the

society certainly welcomes your support, it was also understood that this has been a very difficult time for many so it was agreed that members could take a membership holiday until things are back to “normal”.

Vicki also pointed out that £1,760 was generated from the hire of props and scenery. This is predominantly for the hire of our microphones to local schools and other societies. Our investment in this equipment was over £8,500 so it was great to be able to recoup some of this.

Vicki said she had already mentioned costume hire and the other large entry is £10,265 in donations. £10,000 of this is the grant from Waverley Borough Council which is not, strictly speaking, a donation but our independent examiner is happy with how this has been treated.

Vicki next looked at costs and said that the insurance is higher than last year due to a correction in the allocation of costs between years. The same applies to Sundries which include our Independent Examiner’s fee for both last year and this and a couple of late invoices for the Gondoliers.

She said that depreciation is substantially lower than last year because the sound equipment has now mostly been written off from an accounting perspective and most of the depreciation relates to the studio lease.

With a £10,000 grant contributing to Players having over £49,000 in the bank at the year end, it might sound as if we have nothing to worry about financially but it is worth talking a little bit about future commitments.

Vicki said we were all hoping that it will be possible to stage Legally Blonde at the end of March 2021 and that we would be playing to a full house every night. However, we do not know at this stage what rules may be in place as regards social distancing and, irrespective of those rules, when our audiences will feel safe to return to live theatre. With shows costing up to £22,000, it would be quite easy to make a substantial loss.

We also have a commitment, under our lease at the studio, to undertake work to fully separate our scenery and costume store from the nursery school. We had started to look at what is required last year but with lockdown, any activity was put on hold. However, the work is becoming more urgent and is likely to cost in the region of £20,000.

Vicki confirmed that she had taken the decision to step down as treasurer and stand as chairman and, assuming they were both voted in, she would be handing over the reins to the very capable Mike Byrne.

Vicki finally invited any questions from the members.

Hamish thanked Vicki for her clear accounts. The Trustees approved the adoption of the Report and Accounts. Proposed by Chris Lloyd and seconded by Pamela Depledge.

5. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:

Chris Lloyd started by saying, who would have thought that Players would not have been able to stage a production for twelve months, nor that the AGM would be held on Zoom, rather than in a garden combined with the summer barbecue and a musical accompaniment.

He said that the Society’s year started with Show Stoppers “An Evening of Love”, a collection of classic and modern smash hits encapsulating romantic love, the challenges we all face in life and losses we experience – all stitched together with a generous amount of comedy. This was Lucy Loveland’s directorial first before she and her family returned to the United States of America. The programme included famous songs from La La Land, Oklahoma, Into the Woods, Rent, Hamilton, Phantom of the Opera, The Greatest Showman and Evita.

In October we saw a second directorial debut with Adrian Stent and Evita. Evita is acclaimed as one of the greatest musicals of all time. Adrian, Lizzie, the production team and all the cast did the most fabulous job in producing what has got to be one the Haslemere Players’ most spectacular and successful shows. Productions like this demonstrate the high standard of amateur shows and help to attract audiences.

Straight after Evita, rehearsals started for Legally Blonde with a third new director in a row, Fiona McGregor, supported by Justin Luke as musical director. Fiona had roped in family and friends to help both on stage and behind the scenes, designing, building and painting the set. Rehearsals were going well and we were preparing

for the get in and dress rehearsals when COVID-19 caused lockdown. A real blow to everyone involved, especially with the high energy levels.

The intention was to defer Legally Blonde until October. However, with the uncertainty of when we would be allowed to put on a live show, combined with restricted audience numbers resulting from social distancing, the difficult decision was taken to further defer the production until March 2021 when it would be back with a bang and a lot of pink!

Shortly prior to lockdown, the committee had decided that the October show would be Kipps, The New Half a Sixpence and a licence was secured. Kim Seymour will be directing with Justin Luke as the musical director.

With “Legally Blonde” and “Kipps, The New Half a Sixpence” we have a fabulous line-up of shows for 2021. The committee will make a decision about the summer slot once there is certainty about what is possible; fingers crossed that we will be able to put on a full programme.

Chris confirmed that he was standing down as chairman. He always said that he would only hold the post for three to four years and it is now four years.

Chris had been reminded that at the start of his tenure, he was faced with number of challenges, including the loss of the school as our rehearsal space and finding a director for Wizard of Oz, the challenge of which Vicki took on and smashed on her first time directing a show.

Chris said he was very pleased that we rekindled the show selection sub-committee, which Alex Boughton agreed to chair. The members have been a real support in working with potential directors in selecting shows. The depth of knowledge and analysis which they have demonstrated has really helped in the committee’s decision making.

COVID-19 has prevented the work on the Studio and the school from being completed, however he hoped that the determination and momentum that has developed will see this complete within twelve months.

Chris said we had also demonstrated that we can successfully put on a varied range of shows, not least “The Full Monty”. He remembered at least one committee member saying “over my dead body”. Chris was still looking for the corpse!

Chris said that, as many of you know, he believed that the need to preserve the historic knowledge of an organisation, especially what does and does not work, is balanced by the need to keep ideas fresh and to avoid stagnation. Therefore, any committee membership should refresh on an ongoing basis. Members standing down, recharging their batteries and having the opportunity to see things from a different perspective, fulfil that need; so he was very excited when Vicki agreed to stand for the committee again last year and to take on the role of Treasurer. In this perspective he was also very happy that another returning member is standing this year, together with two new young members who will bring fresh ideas and energy.

Chris wanted to thank this year’s committee for all their hard work and support. It had been a real team effort with everyone doing their part to ensure the smooth running of the Society. In particular, he wanted thank Adrian, who is also standing down from the committee. He has devoted many hours to the Studio and to set design and construction. He has also represented the Society on the Hall committee. Whilst he is standing down from the committee, Adrian has agreed to continue supporting the Society in these tasks so we will continue to see him playing an active role in the Society.

Next year’s committee is going to be a strong one with Vicki standing as the new chair and three new members standing for election. The combination of fresh ideas and energy, experience and in-depth knowledge of the Society, and Hamish as President, means that the society will be in very good hands next year and Chris looked forward to supporting them from the sidelines.

6. SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Acting members £30, Students and non-acting £10, Patrons per family £20.

It was suggested that members should have the option of a subs 'holiday' as no shows have been presented or intend to be presented for this year. It was pointed out that we still have ongoing expenses, e.g. upkeep of the Studio, etc. and subs paid on a voluntary basis would be much appreciated.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

At present the officers and executive committee members are:

President: Hamish Donaldson. Chairman: Christopher Lloyd. Treasurer: Vicki Gavin,

Secretary: Pamela Depledge.

Present members of the Executive Committee: Sally Barr, Mary-Lou Knox, Jane McMichael, Verity Foster, Fiona McGregor, Arabella Burwood, Andy Johnston, Adrian Stent.

Mr Christopher Lloyd, Chairman, wishes to stand down. It is proposed that Miss Victoria Gavin stand as Chairman with Mr Michael Byrne to stand as Treasurer. Miss Alexander Boughton and Miss Hannah Lucas have been proposed to stand as members of the Executive Committee.

The officers and Executive Committee members were duly elected unanimously by those present, with no dissensions.

Mike, Alex and Hannah were welcomed on to the Executive Committee.

Hamish pointed out that Chris has been Chairman of the Haslemere Players for the past four years and considerable tribute should be paid to him. He made adaptations to mics and has worked extremely hard, including organising directors for shows, etc. all of which had been a great success. Hamish suggested he should be awarded Life Membership of the Haslemere Players which was agreed by acclaim.

RULES

Hamish told the meeting that the changes forced by the Corona Virus pandemic had shown that some of the existing Rules needed updating. The meeting agreed unanimously to change Rules 18 and 20:

Rule 18

Form of Meetings

"A meeting of the trustees or Members may be held either in person or by suitable electronic means agreed by the Trustees in which all participants may communicate with all the other participants."

To be deleted:

'but the Annual General Meeting in each year must be held in person.'

Rule 20

Notice of General Meeting

Revision: A notice of every general Meeting shall be sent to each member at least twenty-one days prior to the date of the Meeting. The Statement of accounts for the past year, the particulars of nominations for the Committee (including the Officers and Auditors) and any proposal for the election of Life Members shall be sent to each member at least seven days before the Annual General Meeting.

8. AUDITOR: Mr Nigel Oldham has agreed to continue as our Independent Examiner.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Hamish mentioned that Sally Barr had been instrumental in obtaining a grant from Waverley Council of £10,000 which would help considerably at this difficult time, especially with the building work envisaged at the studio.

Mary-Lou acknowledged the hours that Stephanie Ridler puts in at the Studio and Props store, with Gary tidying up and doing the odd repair work. He has also made new parking notices for our spaces in the studio car park. The tidying up was particularly relevant as the landlord was due for a visit. Hamish said he would pass on our compliments to Gary.

Mary-Lou reported that she had taken surplus costumes to the Grayshott charity shop.

10. Hamish thanked everyone for attending and the Zoom meeting closed at 8.10 pm.