

FROME FESTIVAL LIMITED Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Monday 9th March 2020 at 7 p.m. at The Cheese and Grain, Frome

Present: Richard Ackroyd, Geraldine Butland, Suzanne Cooke, Teresa Cotterell, Susan Date, Hugh Deed*, Patricia Eames, Emily Gerrard, Sheila Gore, Rt. Hon David Heath CBE+, Bernadette Hewitt, Paul Hewitt, Mandy Hulme, Margery Hyde, Andrew Jones, Marie-Louise Macleay, Russell Milne, Christine Milne, Robert Morris*+(Chair) Marjorie Morris+, Sara Morris, Gail Norris*, Simon Norris*, Patricia Oakley, Dara O'Hare*, Margaret Perry (Treasurer), Dinah Randall, Gavin Rea*(Chair Elect) Diana Richards, Sharon Rossiter, Jennifer Ruddy, Roger Southard*, Caroline Toll, Jeremy Towler* (Company Secretary)

Apologies: Brenda Bannister, Martin Bax (President), John Birkett-Smith+, Andrew Bryant, Dorothy-Anne Bryant, Theresa Clark*, Peter Clark, Des Harris, Mick Randall *, Jane Robinson, George Rodgers, Margaret Rodgers, Richard Rycroft*, Nicholas Treacy, Maggie Williams

*Denotes serving Board Member

+ Denotes Vice President

1. **Minutes of Last AGM.** These had been previously circulated and were agreed as a true record of that meeting.
2. **Matters Arising:** None
3. **Chairman's Report:** Bob Morris welcomed Members to the meeting and stressed that although the item was designated as the Chairman's report it was, in effect, the report of the Board itself. This year unfortunately Theresa Clark had decided to step down from the Board and Bob thanked her for her many years of work on behalf of the Festival generally and in particular in relation to the stewarding of events. Bob stressed that the Board was there to oversee the running of the Festival but that the creative decisions were made by the Creative Director, Martin Dimery without interference from the Board. He also thanked the other members of Staff Beverly Jones and Margaret Perry for all their dedicated work. This year the Festival had produced a surplus in funds which was very gratifying particularly after last year's loss. Certain specific sources of funding were key to the Festival's continued success. These included the funding gratefully received from the Town Council, our various sponsors and specific events like Hidden Gardens.
 - Gavin Rea gave a short resume of the sponsorship team. Over the last year this had comprised Gavin and Marjorie Morris, Karen Ogborn and Suzanne Cooke. All four had worked very hard to elicit sponsorship from local businesses. The range of sponsorship was from individual prizes for competitions and quizzes to sums of money ranging up to £1,000. In addition, the Festival also received sponsorship in kind, most notably from StellaSoft for our IT needs and EyeTech for the use of the Festival Office. Last year there had been a total of 76 sponsors raising approximately £12,000. Sadly, Karen had now left the Board but her place on the sponsorship team was being taken by Andy Jones. Gavin said the outlook for 2020 was positive.

- Gavin also gave a short update on the Friend's scheme. Membership currently stood at 194 which was a record. Preferential booking for Friends would be available on May 15th.
- In response to a question from the floor about trying to promote the Friends' scheme more during this period of financial uncertainty Gavin agreed that this was certainly an aim and that it would be actively pursued.
- Bob Morris offered the Chairman's Report to the meeting for adoption. This was proposed by Marie-Louise Macleay and seconded by Marjorie Morris and carried *nem con*.

4. Financial report

- Margaret Perry gave a summary of the financial position. The total of the amounts in the bank and petty cash was £32,428 at the end of the financial year as compared to £26,754 last year.
- Total income this year was £98,177 as compared to £90,739 in 2018.
- Ticket sales were higher though this was partly attributable to more precise recording for sales of joint promotions with the Cheese and Grain. We do not have figures for other venues that sell tickets direct, however.
- The total expenditure was £92,503. In 2018 it was £98,286
- The surplus of £5,600 was welcome and compared well to the average surplus over the past 7 years which was £2,100
- Bob Morris thanked Margaret for her work throughout the year on the finances.
- The Treasurers report was adopted by the meeting *nem con*

5. Festival Director's Report

Martin Dimery began his report by referring to the fact that the Frome Town Council had decided to reduce the amount of financial support it gave the Festival. This would be a continuing issue with further meetings with the Council planned. The other challenge on the horizon was the current feared Coronavirus outbreak. It was still quite early and not really possible to say how public events might be affected however we would keep this under review, in particular to ensure that any advance bookings allowed re-scheduling if we were prevented from going ahead.

- Martin said that ticket sales last year had been higher. It was interesting to analyse the breakdown of sales from the Cheese and Grain box office. This showed that visitors were coming from other parts of the UK and also overseas. Interestingly, 42% of sales were from outside the area which showed that the Festival was certainly attracting visitors to the Town.
- Martin particularly singled out the Singers Project from last year's Festival as one of the highlights. It was of particular relevance to Frome and drew together the artisan and artistic history of the town.
- This year there were a number of highlights to look forward to which include comedians Reginald D Hunter, Paul Foot and Mitch Benn, musicians Andy Fairweather-Low and Sophie Ellis Bextor and bands The Boomtown Rats and The Lightning Seeds among others. Popular events like Hidden Gardens would also feature.
- Martin thanked Beverley Jones and Margaret Perry for their work and support in bringing the programme together and Bob Morris who was standing down as Chair this year and for whom, Martin's words, it had been an honour to serve.

- Bob moved that the Creative Director's report be accepted and this was done by general acclamation.

6. Election of Officers

- This year three existing Board members were retiring by rotation namely Hugh Deed, Gail Norris and Simon Norris. All three were offering themselves for re-election.
- In addition there were three new Board members proposed these were Andrew Jones (Proposed by Marjorie Morris and seconded by Marie-Louise Macleay) Lockhart Murdoch (Proposed by Gavin Rea and seconded by Jeremy Towler) and Susan Date (Proposed by Jeremy Towler and seconded by Bob Morris)
- All six nominees were elected.

7. Any Other Business

- Bob Morris indicated that he was formally standing down as Chairman with effect from this date. Gavin Rea as Chairman elect would be taking over.
- Gavin in paying tribute to Bob's period as Chairman since 2005 said that he had calmly steered the Festival through those year forging strong relations with the Board, the staff and the many volunteers., he had been magnificent ambassador for the Festival and would be an impossible act to follow. As a mark of the Board's gratitude it had been proposed that Bob and Marjorie should be vice presidents. In addition, on behalf of the Board and the office staff, Gavin made a presentation of an original Sholto Walker picture with the warm regards of all concerned.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm