

# **HUNTINGDONSHIRE MUSIC SCHOOL**

## **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020/21**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This is the fifth annual report by the trustees of the Huntingdonshire Music School presented to the Annual General Meeting of the charity to be held on 22nd February 2022. The Music School became a charitable incorporated organisation in August 2016.
- 1.2 Following relocation from the former Huntingdonshire Regional College to Hinchingsbrooke School in September 2016, the Music School has now completed its fifth full year of operation as a registered charity managed by a board of trustees.
- 1.3 A person registering as a student or a parent/guardian of a student under the age of 16 automatically becomes a member of the charity. The student terms and conditions provide for membership to cease when a student leaves unless they advise the Music School to the contrary. Others can join and become a member if they so wish. The implications of decisions taken by trustees during the past year and their impact on membership in terms of the AGM is dealt with later in the report.

### **2. Impact of Coronavirus**

- 2.1 The previous year's annual report explained the serious repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Music School. The lockdown arrangements announced by the Government meant that the last face-to-face tuition and ensembles were provided at Hinchingsbrooke School on 14th March 2020. The lifting of lockdown in May of that year and ongoing concerns about the virus meant that it was impractical to resume lessons and ensembles before the end of that summer term.
- 2.2 Trustees reviewed the situation in terms of a possible return to face-to-face tuition in September 2020 but even though infection rates had fallen significantly since the first wave, it was decided that this would not be possible given the guidance then being issued by the Government. Regrettably, the situation deteriorated again in the autumn with the announcement of a second lockdown in November. The trustees had already reviewed the situation again after organising a survey of students before the second lockdown. They reluctantly decided that there were insufficient students likely to return to face-to-face lessons to make this an economic proposition in January bearing in mind the costs involved in renting the accommodation at Hinchingsbrooke.

2.3 This was the position when the previous AGM was held on 2nd December 2020.

### **3. The Past Year**

- 3.1 A third lockdown with wide ranging restrictions came into effect at Christmas 2020 which meant that face-to-face tuition would not have been possible in the spring term of 2021, even if trustees had not already decided that this was impractical.
- 3.2 Music School numbers had been gradually increasing before the first lockdown was announced. This was due to measures taken by the trustees to revise the timetable and format of ensembles, relocate ensembles to the refectory at Hinchingsbrooke School and provide refreshments all of which had meant that a 'buzz' was returning to Music School on Saturday mornings. All of that came to an end when face-to-face contact was prohibited in March 2020.
- 3.3 To ensure a continuation of music tuition, trustees introduced on-line lessons with many people finding that platforms such as Zoom and Teams became part of their everyday life. To help retain students, fees were halved for on-line tuition in the summer term of 2020 and continued at a reduced rate subsequently. Trustees also recognised that some tutors might rely on tuition fees for their livelihood and might face difficulties financially if lessons had not continued. Tutors providing lessons therefore were paid at their normal rates.
- 3.4 At the time of the last AGM, the numbers receiving tuition had fallen to 35 of those who previously had received tuition at Hinchingsbrooke and only 8 in primary schools. Trustees had agreed to look into actively marketing on-line tuition to try to increase numbers but many households were being affected financially or other priorities had come to the fore due to the impact of the pandemic.
- 3.5 Trustees continued to hold regular meetings electronically as 2021 progressed to monitor the situation in the hope that face-to-face lessons and ensembles could resume. However, it had become apparent as early as January that schools were unlikely to re-open before Easter. By the end of February, the earliest date that was being discussed for a return to indoor rehearsals was late June and it was again not considered feasible to plan for a return for such a short time before the summer holidays began.
- 3.6 Trustees continued to liaise with the staff of Hinchingsbrooke School about the return of Music School in September. While the staff expressed the hope that Music School would return, it became

apparent that circumstances had changed in terms of the use of the school site by external organisations on Saturday mornings. Trustees were told to expect an increase in the hire charge if Music School returned and the continuing disruption caused by the pandemic meant that the school were reluctant to commit to definitive information.

- 3.7 A survey of students was undertaken in the summer term by Robin Norman, the Development and Excellence Adviser, but only 27 replies were received. Trustees therefore contacted those who had not responded personally to determine their intentions in the event of it being possible to resume face-to-face tuition and ensembles in September. The results were not encouraging as few of those contacted expressed an interest in returning in September.
- 3.8 As at the end of May, there were 37 students receiving on-line lessons and 11 in primary schools. Numbers had therefore remained fairly stable since the previous analysis at the end of 2020. A few new enquiries about lessons had been received but some students had found on-line lessons to be convenient and flexible and one of the tutors wanted to continue working from home rather than at Hinchingsbrooke.
- 3.9 In May also came the news of the impending departures of both the Manager, Rebecca Norman, and her husband, Robin, who played an integral part in the Music School as Development and Excellence Adviser, tutor and the leader of various ensembles. Other employment opportunities had arisen for both of them and they had decided after many years of service to the Music School to leave at the end of the summer term.
- 3.10 Trustees met towards the end of May and reviewed the situation in view of the increasing number of challenges facing the Music School which can be summarised as –
- the departure of Rebecca and Robin Norman and the potential difficulty in replacing them;
  - an increase in the rent charged by Hinchingsbrooke School in September with the likelihood of a further increase in January 2022;
  - the probable departure of another of the tutors and ensemble leaders and the need to find a replacement;
  - insufficient students wishing to return to face-to-face lessons on Saturday mornings for a variety of reasons, including financial hardship due to the pandemic, the elapse of time since face-to-face lessons had been cancelled in March 2020, a preference for the flexibility of on-line lessons, not wishing to commit to a regular Saturday morning lesson or ensemble, and a desire to pursue other interests or family time on Saturday mornings;

- at least one of the tutors not wishing to return to face-to-face lessons on Saturday mornings for similar reasons to students/parents;
  - the loss of students in primary schools and a lack of interest on the part of schools in encouraging music tuition.
- 3.11 Given the circumstances, trustees came to the difficult decision that the Music School would not be financially viable in its current format in September as there would be insufficient income from lessons to meet the cost of accommodation, tutors and a replacement manager/administrator. Despite all the efforts by trustees to attract new students over the past 5 years since the formation of the new charity and the move to Hinchingsbrooke School, numbers had remained relatively static on Saturday mornings, the number of students in primary schools had dwindled and the number of ensembles had had to be reduced.
- 3.12 The majority of trustees expressed an interest in continuing with Music School but it was recognised that this was dependent on attracting more people if this was to be viable.
- 3.13 Trustees acknowledge that circumstances have changed significantly since the heyday of Music School when it was managed by Huntingdonshire Regional College. There is much more competition from other activities on Saturday mornings and learning to play an instrument appears less popular than in previous years. For the more experienced musicians, other groups and community choirs already exist in Huntingdonshire and children of school age are catered for by the music hubs supported by Government funding. For any of the ensembles to continue, they need to achieve a critical membership mass, find a niche area not already met by other groups and attract a musical director who is prepared to develop a new group.
- 3.14 A range of options were considered if the Music School was to continue but trustees reluctantly accepted that there was no future for the organisation in its current format of individual lessons and ensembles. All tuition and Saturday morning ensembles therefore were terminated with effect from the end of the summer term and the contracts with tutors were not renewed.
- 3.15 During the summer and autumn, trustees explored the possibility of establishing new ensembles/choir possibly at different times or venues with a view to relaunching the Music School in January 2022. This would be dependent on identifying potential musical directors, with members of those groups being expected to undertake some of the administration themselves in the absence of a manager/administrator following the departure of Rebecca Norman. Various approaches were made to individual musicians to ask if they were interested in becoming leaders but most failed to

reply even when reminders were sent. The possibility of closer liaison with Huntingdonshire Philharmonic was explored in discussions with one of that organisation's trustees. Those enquiries are continuing in the hope that one or more of their semi-professional musicians might be interested in forming feeder ensembles for the Philharmonic and Choir under the umbrella of the Music School.

- 3.16 Unfortunately, the pandemic continued to wreak havoc for the Music School in the autumn term with meetings having to be cancelled due to illness and family bereavement. Yet another new variant and wave of infections led to a surge in the number of daily infections in December and the introduction of further restrictions by the Government that have only recently been lifted.
- 3.17 At present, the only ensemble that is continuing to function is the Music School Big Band. As the format of Saturday morning rehearsals at Hinchingsbrooke had been proving unpopular, the Big Band already had moved to meeting at Buckden Church on a weekday evening and numbers had increased. Although they also were unable to rehearse from March 2020, they had kept in touch with weekly on-line meetings until they were able to resume playing outdoors initially in the summer of 2021 and latterly indoors at Grafham. They played at two external engagements and had been booked for a third in December when that also was cancelled due to the surge in pandemic case numbers. Rehearsals again were cancelled but resumed in February 2022.

#### **4. Financial Position**

- 4.1 Despite the problems encountered over the past two years, the Music School is in a healthy position financially. Two payments were received in the past year totalling £6,000 from the Government's support for organisations affected by the pandemic. The Treasurer's report will be presented separately to the AGM but the reserves stood at £16,500.76 at the end of August 2021 which was the end of the Music School's financial year. The situation will not have changed significantly since that time as there will have been few transactions.

#### **5. Trustees and Current Membership**

- 5.1 The constitution of the charity provides for a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 12 trustees. Under the constitution, all of the original 9 trustees who formed the Music School in 2016 had to retire at the first AGM in 2017. One third of the trustees then must retire in each subsequent year but are eligible for re-election. It's the longest serving third since election/re-election who have to retire

each year. There are currently 11 trustees so 4 must retire at this AGM.

5.2 The current trustees are –

Mark Brandon, Mark Deem, Cathy Inman, Chris King, Michael London, Sue London, Dick Martin, Joyce Reeves, Roy Reeves, Stephen Wright and Joy Wu.

5.3 Theoretically, a trustee is elected for 3 years with one third of the total number of trustees retiring each year. That hasn't happened in practice due to some trustees resigning before the end of their third year.

5.4 Mark Brandon was co-opted in March 2019 and Cathy Inman, Chris King, Dick Martin, Joyce Reeves, Roy Reeves and Stephen Wright were either elected or re-elected at the AGM in October 2019. At the last AGM in December 2020, Sue London, Michael London and Joy Wu were re-elected as trustees. Mark Deem was co-opted as a trustee in February 2021.

5.5 The four trustees who must retire at this AGM are therefore Mark Brandon and three of Cathy Inman, Chris King, Dick Martin, Joyce Reeves, Roy Reeves and Stephen Wright. All are eligible for re-election.

5.6 The officers of the charity are elected at the first meeting of the trustees after the AGM. Michael London and Sue London have been Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the past year. Joyce and Roy Reeves are Treasurer and Secretary respectively. The trustees have been responsible for all of the management and administration of the Music School which was previously undertaken by the Regional College. Trustees have tended to meet every 6 weeks or so but only two meetings were able to be held in the autumn term. Meetings have been held remotely since February 2020.

5.7 With the cessation of individual tuition and all ensembles with the exception of Big Band, it means that the membership of the Music School has reduced dramatically compared to previous years. The only current members of the Music School are therefore the trustees themselves and the members of Big Band.

## **6. Looking Forward**

6.1 As we look ahead, it's worth remembering that the Music School owes its origins over 50 years ago to the vision of two members of staff of the then Huntingdon Technical College. Lessons began on a Friday evening in October 1966 with one teacher, one hour of music

tuition, 30 minutes theory and 30 minutes aural. Only two people attended on that first evening but numbers had increased to 36 by the summer term of 1967 with 7 teachers. It's worth remembering also that the population of Huntingdonshire at that time was only about a third of its level today.

- 6.2 The Music School now is in a comfortable position financially, has trustees who wish to see its continuation and a successful ensemble. Much has changed since 1966 but music still remains a fundamental part of everyday life which brings benefits to many people, not least to their mental well-being, a phrase that has come to the fore over the past two years.
- 6.3 The pandemic has had a devastating effect on the lives of many people economically, financially, socially and in terms of their physical and mental health and well-being. The Music School is not unique in feeling its effects and it's understood that other ensembles and choirs locally similarly have lost musical directors and membership numbers. The next 12 months will be challenging as trustees try to find a new format for the Music School but there's inspiration to be found from its humble beginnings in 1966 and the success achieved in subsequent years when the number of students peaked at an amazing 632 in 1997.

Huntingdonshire Music School  
Registered Charity 1167800  
**Combined Education & Events Accounts**  
**Accounts and Balance Sheet for year 1 September 2020 - 31 August 2021**

Transactions

	£	£	£		£	£	£
Income	Education	Events	Total	Expenditure	Education	Events	Total
Fees	###		###	Tutors	16,629.65		16,629.65
Huntingdon Freeman Bursaries	595.00		595.00	Development Manager & admin	5,199.80		5,199.80
Grants	6,000.00		6,000.00	Insurance	132.00		132.00
Concerts			0.00	Office running costs	967.65		967.65
Sale of Merchandise			0.00	Miscellaneous	0.00	90	90.00
Second hand Music			0.00	Refund of Fees	678.46		678.46

<b>Total Income</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>90.00</b>	<b>23,697.56</b>
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**Balance Sheet**

Balance brought forward at 01/09/2020	###	6,873.80	###	Closing Balance as at 31/08/2021	9,716.98	6,783.80	16,500.78
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<b>Balance</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<b>###</b>	<b>6,873.80</b>	<b>40,198.34</b>
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I confirm that this is a true and fair view of the accounts

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Auditor