

St Albans City Band

Annual Meeting of St Albans City Band CIO 1199618

4th December 2024

Present:

Ethan Haley – City Band, Trustee
Nick Garman – Musical Director City Band
Jenny Hill – City band & Safeguarding Officer
Ian Mann - Treasurer
Richard Sved – City Band and Chair
Chris Hughes – City Band, trustee
Trevor Crome – City Band and Librarian, trustee
Micah Gold – Community Band, Secretary
Mark Nichols – City Band
Lucy Gillman – Community Band
Jane Baxter – Community Band
Patrick Smears - Community Band
Jay Joseph – Community Band, Trustee
James Halliwell – City Band
Fiona Claridge – Community Band
Petra McMillan – Community Band
Simon Tong – Youth Band Leader and City Band

1. Chair's Report

Like last year, I'm going to talk about the journey we've been on in the last 12 months (where we were, where we are now, what we need for what's next, things that made me proud, and a few thank yous)

Where we were:

Having come out of the pandemic with only 12 regular players and the one band, by this time last year, we had just started investing in our new band family, as we were lucky enough to have firm financial foundations and were determined to follow our mission "to advance the education of the public and its appreciation of brass band music by public performance and the provision of tuition in the playing of brass instruments". Our band for returning and beginning adults had been running for 2 terms, and our Youth Band for 1 ½ terms. We were still struggling for players at our weekly rehearsals – often as low as 8 or 9 players. It still felt like we were pulling a truck a little.

Where we are: We've focused on building interest in the band and brass playing, sorted out our comms (branding, website, social media, response to enquirers, how they contact us), and continued to develop a family structure of mutually reinforcing bands. With John Campbell stepping down in January 24, we were lucky enough to be able to bring in long-time friend of the band Nicholas Garman as our new MD. With Simon Tong leading the Youth Band and Beth Calderbank leading what we've now called the Community Band, we have really pushed on in terms of performances and numbers (and I want to leave the three of them to talk about this because they deserve to take all the credit) this year.

What we need for what's next: We need to keep learning especially in terms of concert management but we're definitely doing that and are sharing the load more under Chris's gig management. We're really committed to building on 2024's strong platforms in terms of band development and to make sure that the transition of Community Band players to City Band players is a happy one. And we'll need more people to step forward and join the board of trustees – more on the reasons why shortly. It's a wonderful way of "giving back" and not too onerous. See me after!

Moments that made me proud this year: among many, the massed band performances: the joyous Baggy Trousers at the band stand in Clarence Park, and Prismatic Light at the Christmas Extravaganza with around 50 players (and that didn't include a good 10 or so of our Community Band – a real statement of intent; family involvement across bands; the camaraderie that is developing in the bands, and the news that in January, nine Community Band players are moving up to the St Albans City Band. Seeing one band member who joined in 2024 describe it as "life changing stuff".

Thank yous: particularly to Nick, Beth and Simon for their musical direction (we've learned so much from your experience and expertise, and I would like you to know that we are always listening to you, even if we might not always be watching you while we're playing; to the Committee (Nick, Micah, Ian, Ethan, Trevor, Jay and Chris); to Jenny for her support on safeguarding and with our accounts; to everyone who has helped in other ways such as taking photos, heavy lifting, audience development, raffles, refreshments; to everyone who has played with us this year. I mentioned that we need more people on the trustee board, and that's not just because new ideas and input is important. I want to say a big thank you to Micah and Ethan, who will probably be stepping down in 2025.

Final analogy: I mentioned earlier that it had felt like we were pulling a truck. Right now, it feels like we've jumped into the truck's cab and have just started the engine. I can't wait to see where we drive to in 2025.

Richard thanked Nick, Beth and Simon and MD and conductors for the great and hard work they have done this year. Richard thanked in particular, Nick Doolan who negotiated a better rate for rental of our office space, Ian for his treasurer's work, Micah for support with governance, Ethan for all support and dancing during Calypso and

Baggy Trousers, and to all new trustees: Chris for his gig management, Trevor supporting library and property, Jay as conscience for the band and keeping the band room clean, Jenny for safeguarding and work on the accounts. And thank you to all who have played, sold tickets, made cakes and encouraged their children. A special thank you to Polly Napper who resigned this year, but who was instrumental in pulling together the post Covid SACB committee, starting the new band structure, and starting the community band.

Thank you.

Richard Sved, Chair

2. City Band Report – Nick Garman

2024 has been a very good year for the band with (as I write) three successful concerts and one on Sunday 1st Dec to come. It has been a real pleasure to prepare programmes that challenged players but who, on each occasion, rose to those challenges with aplomb. Sharing the stage with other local bands can only be good for the banding community in and around Hertfordshire and I look forward to further such ventures next year. I wish to especially congratulate all soloists who have performed at these concerts. However, perhaps the highlight of the year (so far), was the summer concert in the park where all of our bands took part; my admiration for the fantastic work both Simon and Beth are doing knows no bounds. This is clearly evident in the progression to SACB many of the current training band will make in January.

I wish to thank the committee for their support throughout the year and especially for taking on board the organisational points raised by all three conductors which culminated in what was, from my point of view, a far more professional approach to the recent Autumn concert and resulted in a smooth running on the day and evening. I wish to especially thank both Chris and Trevor for taking on new roles this year.

I will admit to being frustrated, at times, with the 'two steps forward, one step back' results in rehearsals due to occasional lack of individual home practise. The fact that the Autumn concert was, overall, well played, shows what the band as a whole can do; imagine how much more we could achieve with consistent, determined home practise. That said, I do, wholeheartedly appreciate that we all have lives away from the band (well, some do..!) and I will always try to encourage as well as cajole, ensuring rehearsals and concert programmes remain fun and (mostly) light-hearted whilst also challenging in the right way. I like that we have a little break during rehearsals but in order to use the rehearsal time most effectively, I will be aiming to start at 8pm on the dot. There will always be occasions when unexpected travel problems occur but as a rule, I should like to ask players arrive no later than 7.55pm in order to settle, organise their music/instrument/mutes etc so that we can really work as a team with shared values of being the best we can, and also having fun trying to achieve that.

It is sad to have had to say farewell to players; Steph and Ethan moving out of the area and Micah feeling the travel to band too much and I wish each the very best in their new situations.

It would be lovely to think that this time next year we will be approaching a full compliment of players though we are competing with a number of bands in a very small geographical area and for the time being, bringing in one or two extras as needed gives us all a lift when all parts are heard on the day.

I am sure that 2025 will be just as positive, if not more so, than 2024 and I remain dedicated and humbled to be your Musical Director.

Nicholas Garman

3. Youth Band Report

Membership and Growth

The past year has been significant for our youth brass band. We have welcomed nine new players to our ensemble – six complete beginners through two separate intakes and three additional musicians through targeted advertising. Our membership continues to evolve, with a particular focus on developing players for our lower instrumental parts.

This year, we celebrated the progression of several beginners, with two Cornet players, one Tenor Horn player, one Euphonium player, and one trombone player graduating from our initial training groups. Four of these musicians are expected to join the main band in January, which represents a crucial pipeline for our ongoing development.

Musical Development and Performances

Our musical standard has consistently improved throughout the year. Continuous membership and dedicated practice between rehearsals have enabled us to tackle more challenging repertoire. We have performed three concerts in 2024: a standalone performance in the band room in late March, a summer concert at Clarence Park bandstand, and our annual Christmas concert.

These performances have allowed us to explore a varied musical program. Notably, our collaboration with other bands introduced pieces like "Baggy Trousers" and "Prismatic Light". The Christmas concert, featuring a particularly popular performance of "The Snowman", highlighted the band's growing capabilities.

Challenges and Opportunities

We acknowledge the natural turnover of young musicians, particularly as students approach significant academic milestones like GCSEs. Our approach remains focused on creating an enjoyable, inclusive environment that encourages continued participation.

Financial and Resource Considerations

Our financial management has been prudent. Band subscriptions have been consistently paid, and donations have supported additional expenses like band T-shirts. We have been strategic with music purchases, typically maintaining a repertoire of 6-8 pieces per term and recycling certain pieces, especially our Christmas music.

We have identified some resource challenges, including the need to replace our current green music folders, which have proven less durable than anticipated. This will be an important consideration for future budgeting.

Leadership and Future Outlook

We are bidding farewell to Deirdre Waller Box, a founding member who has been integral to the youth band's development over the past 18 months. Her contribution has been invaluable, and we hope to maintain her involvement in an advisory capacity.

Looking forward, our aspirations include:

- Continued band growth
- Incorporating percussion into our lineup
- Hiring a third tutor, potentially a percussion specialist
- Increasing our annual performance schedule
- Participating in youth music events to raise our profile

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the St Albans Brass Band and its committee for their unwavering support. Their commitment to nurturing young musical talent is crucial to the sustainability of brass band traditions.

Two years ago, the future of our main band seemed uncertain. However, our recent Christmas performance demonstrate remarkable progress our banding family has made, and I am confident that we shall continue to grow, develop, and inspire musicians in our community.

Simon Tong, MD Youth Band

4. Community Band

Well, what another successful year with the St Albans Community band.

A group of wonderful people who make learning music and running a new project lots of fun.

In January, it was great to see the previous beginners join the training band, bumping up the numbers. The band have once again put on successful concerts, showing off a variety of repertoire and even meeting the criteria of a themed concert. The players have really excelled throughout the year. We even had members performing as soloists! This is unheard of so early on in a musical career!

The beginners have started with a bang and have already shown St Albans what they can do. They began with a productive 8 week course with a lovely mini concert in the band room to finish the project last summer. This term we have increased the number of notes learnt, learned to play in harmony, added musical dynamics and performed to the public. What a way to start!

My training band have now graduated to the city band on a Wednesday night. It has been a pleasure working with them for the past year and a half and I wish them all the best. (Make sure you stay in touch - all of you!)

I believe the organisation across all the bands has improved from the summer concert, but we have a long way to go to put cherries on top of the cake. I've noted a few ideas down already and look forward to sharing these with the committee in a meeting hopefully in the new year.

The bands are good, but let's make them great!

I look forward to pushing the beginner group in the same direction for next year and welcoming some new members to the St Albans family.

Thank you.

Hope you all have a merry Christmas 🎄

Beth Calderbank

Trevor read out Beths report and added his thanks to Beth for her encouragement and support. This was echoed by other members of the community band. 'She hoodwinks you into making you feel you can'.

Playing as a massed bands gives you a feeling of something massive and it makes you want to work harder to be part of that amazing sound.

Question was also raised as to how to get some of the youth band involved in having their say in how things work.

5. Gig Manager, Librarian, Safeguarding

Gigs – Chris Hughes

- Appreciated everyone's help in making things happen taking on various roles
- Next year planning to get section leads involved in more
- Played to the public on 14 occasions this year. 3 concerts, remembrance parade, various events in December, summer fairs etc.
- Plans next year will be Easter, Summer and winter concerts with other bands and ad hoc events. Want to play to the public more often and raise awareness of the band locally.

Safeguarding- Jenny Hill

- Very important particularly since we had a youth band
- Part of Brass Bands England who have strong safeguarding unit and support
- Updated our policies and all can check them out online
- Also planning a code of conduct for all bands.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility – reach out if concerned or even not sure. Jenny Hill's email is on the website.

Lanyards or other ways of identifying who has safeguarding training is now being used in other bands.

Reminded also not just about young people but for other vulnerable adults too. Jenny will check our policy.

Jenny was thanked for all her work.

Librarian – Trevor Crome

Inherited a well kept library with all running smoothly. We have 850 pieces in the library. We have a budget this year of £1500 for new pieces. We also renewed the hymn books this year and carol books. Trevor joined the Brass Bands England librarians group. Copyright is a hot topic and Trevor requested all adhere to copyright licenses. Also seeking a librarian for the youth band.

Trevor was thanked.

6. Treasurers Report

- Planned for loss over 23/24 because we were investing in the band starting a community and youth band and paying for new musical directors.
- We also had additional legal costs in this year to move from the old charity to the new CIO
- Subscriptions have now started to increase as membership of all bands has increased

Income and Expenditure			
Income	£ 20,740.35	Expenditure	£ 26,725.54
Subscriptions	£ 3,452.00	Conducting & paid players	£ 10,288.60
Engagements	£ 200.00	Concerts & engagements	£ 758.75
Concerts	£ 588.35	Music Purchases	£ 825.07
Prize Money	£ -	Business Rates	£ 1,383.23
Hire / Lettings	£ 16,500.00	Instruments & equipment	£ 895.00
Miscellaneous	£ -	Insurance	£ 1,772.04
Zhoosh recharges (net off expenses)	£ -	Service Charges net of recharge to tenant	£ 1,970.48
		Website management	£ 198.00
		Miscellaneous/Solicitors	£ 8,101.73
		Electricity net of recharge to tenant	£ 532.64
Deficit for the year	£ 5,985.19		
Total	£ 26,725.54	Total	£ 26,725.54

Funds Movements during the year			
Opening Balance 1st April 2023	£46,648.58	Balance of CCLA account	£ 6,778.37
		Bank account Expenditure	£ 26,725.54
Closing Balance 31st March 2024	£40,663.39	Total Capital	£ 47,441.76

7. Secretary's update

- All committee meetings well attended, quorate, and productive this year – meetings take place around once every 6 weeks online
- Our online presence gets stronger and stronger thank you Richard for effectively also being our Marcomms team.
- Our shared drive has all key documents on it and is accessible for all trustees and future post holders.
- The old charity was finally formally closed this year and Barclays finally noticed that we changed legal entity and have reissued the bank mandates. All old governance matters are fully resolved.
- New trustees Jay, Trevor and Chris were added as trustees and formally added to our Charity commission entry

- Our accounts for 23/24 are due for submission by end of Jan 25 and Micah will try and submit prior to Christmas.

The meeting was closed at 20.37