

Minutes of the ASB 41st Annual General Meeting

Performing Arts Centre, Redmaids' High School

Tuesday January 14th 2025 at 7.05p.m

Committee members:

Henry Alpass (HA), Mary Alpass (MA), Lin Cobb (LC), Kate Floyd (KF), Liz Jarvis (LJ), Susan Merelie (SM), Viv Munday (VM), Jinx Newley (JN), Debby Sandow (DS), Suzy Sibley (SS), Keira Stobie (KS)

1. Welcome (Miss Susan Hampton, President)

Good evening and welcome to the 41st AGM of The Arts Society Bristol. It is indeed pleasing to reflect on the successful lectures and events of the past year.

We have again enjoyed a programme of lectures covering topics ranging from cultural shifts in men's tailoring to the rejuvenation of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park after the 2012 Olympics. In addition, some members spent a morning discovering "unknown" Harbourside and other groups have met for lunchtime concerts at St. George's. Further afield, the packed schedule for the visit to Nice in October was much enjoyed.

We are fortunate to have an effective Committee, ably led by our enthusiastic Chair, Kate.

Two Committee members have received national recognition – Debby Sandow for her work with Heritage Volunteers, and Susan Merelie for her determination in pursuing the award of £2000 (two thousand pounds) from the Patricia Fay Memorial Fund.

I express my warmest thanks to Kate and her Committee for all that they have achieved on behalf of the membership. Well done, and thank you!

2. Apologies (KF)

Apologies had been received from:

- Mary Alpass
- Liz Jarvis

80 Members had been registered at the venue by this point and so the meeting was declared quorate.

3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 9th January 2024 (KF)

These had been made available via the Arts Society Bristol website for the specified period prior to the meeting. No matters arising or amendments had been received, and there were no comments from those in attendance. Therefore, the Minutes of the last meeting were accepted and approved without comment and will be signed by the Chair.

Proposed: Dinah Moore

Seconded: Stella Victory

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

4. Chair's Report (KF)

We have had an interesting year with a wide selection of lectures which is the core of what we do. The Arts Society nationally has seen a lot of upheaval in the last year with the

departure of Florian Schweitzer the CEO and the appointment of a new board of Trustees but their main function of providing a directory of carefully selected excellent speakers, with in-depth knowledge of their subjects, continues and that is the USP of this society and why we are members.

We have aimed during the year to also provide some short outside trips - a ceramics study morning at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, a lunch time concert at St George's and a Harbourside walk. The highlight for many of you was the trip to The South of France, but not everyone can commit to a long holiday tour which is why we organise local activities to provide variety.

In 2025 we are again offering a study morning and a walk, and of course the UK tour to Manchester in September. And we will be holding our traditional summer party in June. Please email me chair@theartssociety-bristol.org.uk if you have ideas for visits and outings and also lecture topics. The next lecture programme will be put together in March ready to tell you the details at the last lecture of the season in May.

Without pre-empting what our treasurer is going to say, I am very pleased that our membership numbers are stable and are in fact increasing slowly. That is all thanks to you the members - we know from various publicity initiatives we have tried that the majority of new members join because you bring your friends as guests and they stay - so thank you and continue to spread the word. The Arts Society head office is also starting on a campaign to increase the visibility of the Society and the logo which is still not sufficiently recognised. More members means a stable subscription rate, a thriving society and the possibility of supporting more groups in the community by dedicating the Gift Aid we claim to sponsorship.

I have been delighted with the charities we have been able to support this year. We have sponsored workshop sessions at Expressions art studio run by Milestones trust that looks after adults with learning difficulties. Sadly, the studio has had to close just before Christmas and we are awaiting developments - the sessions were so much enjoyed by the participants.

We have also supported Stitching Together, a sewing initiative for refugees and asylum-seeking women and you saw their beautiful tree decorations in December, at Treefest and in the foyer before our December lecture. We are hoping to continue our support of them in their next project.

I really believe that this aspect of what we do is very important as it widens engagement with the arts for all. We will soon be bringing you news of our sponsorship of a project at St George's to send musicians into primary schools to do day workshops with the children. And our Community Arts Secretary is also exploring the possibility of us sponsoring some art session run by a charity that sends artists into prisons to work with prisoners.

Finally, I want to say a big thank you to our committee. They all work hard on your behalf and I look forward to committee meetings because of all the ideas they bring and the lively discussions we have. Most of all its fun being part of The Arts Society Bristol.

5. Election of Committee members and Officers (KF)

Members were informed that the following Committee members were standing for election or re-election for another Term of Office:

- MA as Speakers Secretary
- EJ as Membership Secretary
- JN as Without Portfolio
- DS as Heritage Volunteering Secretary

Proposed: Stella Victory

Seconded: Heather Fry

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

Members were then asked to vote to confirm the appointment of Vivian Munday as Treasurer.

Proposed: Jane Newley

Seconded: Susan Merelie

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions and warmly welcomed to the committee.

6. Treasurer's Report and appointment of External Examiner (VM)

A summary of the full report published on the Society's website for the specified period prior to the meeting was displayed for those in attendance.

Thank you for voting me in and can I start with a huge thank you to Stella Victory for her time as Treasurer and for the support she has provided to me as I have taken over the accounts and settled into the Art Society.

As usual I'll start with a brief overview of our financial situation.

As expected, we continued to run a deficit to reduce the excess reserves accrued during the Covid period.

Looking at the signed accounts for the year ended 30th June 2024, during that time we incurred a deficit of £422 (four hundred and twenty two pounds) which was smaller than forecast. The total income was £15, 602 (fifteen thousand six hundred and two pounds), the majority of which came from subscriptions of £9, 616 (nine thousand six hundred and sixteen pounds), together with Guest donations of £896 (eight hundred and ninety six pounds) and Gift Aid of £1, 381 (one thousand three hundred and eighty one pounds).

Income from Study Days and the Summer Party are shown separately, but they more or less balance out the expenditure on these activities as shown under expenditure. Support for these activities was less than in the previous year.

Miscellaneous income was marginally higher than the previous year.

Looking at Expenditure, costs totalled £16,204 (sixteen thousand two hundred and four pounds), the most significant of which were speakers' costs of £4,120 (four thousand one hundred and twenty pounds) and lecture room hire of £3,115 (three thousand one hundred and fifteen pounds).

An additional cost, essential to the provision of lectures, was The Arts Society Services fee of £3,324 (three thousand three hundred and twenty four pounds). As you know, our excellent lecturers are all sourced through The Arts Society, which also supplies online material, and holds our database and insurance.

Our Community and Young Arts awards totalled £1,185 (one thousand one hundred and eighty five pounds). This included a £500 (five hundred pound) donation to the RWA Happy Mondays art project for autistic children, £135 (one hundred and thirty five pounds) to the RWA for described tours for the visually impaired and a donation of £550 (five hundred and fifty pounds) to the Milestones Trust Expressions project which uses art to help people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. In addition, The Art Society Community Grant of £250 (two hundred and fifty pounds) was made to Stitching Together, which is an organisation helping to break down cultural barriers by bringing refugees and locals together to learn stitching skills.

Miscellaneous costs reduced to a more usual level.

We started the year on 1st July 2023 with high reserves of £23,327 (twenty three thousand three hundred and twenty seven pounds) which we thought would reduce to around £21,000 (twenty one thousand pounds) during the year. However, at 30th June 2024, the deficit for the year had only reduced our reserves to £22,905 (twenty two thousand nine hundred and five pounds). This was due to lower than expected costs and an increase in bank interest and guest donations.

Turning to the forecast for the current year to 30th June 2025, we agreed to increase our subscription rates for the financial year 2024 - 2025. Membership numbers remain around the 200 mark, so our income from subscriptions will increase. However, while it's difficult to predict costs part way through the year, we are seeing some increases so I have estimated that there will be another small deficit of approximately £400 - £800 (four to eight hundred pounds) and our reserves will remain in the order of £22,000 (twenty two thousand pounds).

However, in 2025 -2026 we do anticipate further increases in hall fee hire costs and the Art Society recharge fee which will reduce the reserves to a more usual level of around one year's expenditure.

For this reason, I do not recommend any changes in membership subscription fees for 2025 - 2026.

I am extremely grateful to Barry Wilkinson for having acted as our Independent Examiner for the year to 30th June 2024. This is an essential function to check that the figures all appear to be reasonable, and Barry has kindly done this for a number of years. We extend our sincere thanks to him as he steps back from this role.

Edward Corrigan has very kindly agreed to act as Independent Examiner for the year to 30th June 2025.

Questions were then invited from Members.

What would be a typical speaker's fee?

This would usually be in the region of £450 (four hundred and fifty pounds).

What is the major cost for The Arts Society Bristol?

Speakers' fees are the most significant outgoing.

Do speakers charge expenses in addition to their fee?

Although it is sometimes necessary to cover additional costs such as overnight hotel accommodation, the average expenditure per speaker remains approximately £450 (four hundred and fifty pounds).

Why has there been an increase in bank charges this year?

This is because of fees associated with transactions made via a new card reader, which has enabled card as well as cash payments to be accepted at lectures.

Are such fees applied to registered charities?

This is currently the case.

The committee then recommended that the signed accounts for the year ended 30th June 2024 be adopted by the society.

Proposed: Lin Cobb

Seconded: Jane Newley

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

The committee also recommended that Edward Corrigan be appointed to the position of Independent Examiner for the year ending 30th June 2025.

Proposed: Debby Sandow
Seconded: Jane Newley

Agreed unanimously with no votes against or abstentions.

Thanks were extended to SV for preparing these accounts and to VM for capably taking on the vital role of Treasurer.

7. AOB (KF)

No other resolutions were proposed in person at the meeting or prior to it via e mail. Therefore, it was assumed there was no other business and the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7. 20 p.m., with thanks extended to all those present for attending.

8. Date and time of 40th Annual General Meeting (KF)

Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 7.00 p. m.