



THE COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held online
on 17 November 2020

- 1 The Chair, Stuart Mole, welcomed members who were present for the meeting.
- 2 **Apologies for absence** were received from Domini Bingham, Chris Bowman, Andrea David Hugh-Kong and Asif Khan.
3. **Housekeeping** Hilary McEwan ran through the procedures for the meeting with regard to the use of the Blue Jeans system for the virtual meeting.
- 4 **Minutes of the 2019 AGM** held on 29 June 2019 were presented. Cheryl Dorall had pointed out that she had not been Secretary since the foundation of the Association, but had held the post between 2009 and 2018. With this correction, the minutes were accepted as a correct record, proposed by Antony Ellman, seconded by Richard Longhurst.
5. **Chair's report.** Stuart Mole noted that most of the report concerned a period when Patsy Robertson was Chair of the Association. There had been a huge outpouring of grief on the occasion of Patsy's death with obituaries appearing in many newspapers and on websites. The Executive Committee agreed that there should be a lasting legacy and the possibilities in this area were being explored.

Stuart highlighted the disruption of our activities caused by both the coronavirus pandemic and the refurbishment of Marlborough House.

Stuart mentioned the Membership of the Executive Committee. Cheryl Dorall had pointed out that the number of positions available for co-opted members was 3, not 2. Retiring members included Dharani Rethnam, who had been on the Committee since its

foundation. She had been the first Secretary and later took on the role of membership officer. She deserved special thanks for all that she had done over the years. Others who were standing down from the Committee included Sherrill Burton, Domini Bingham and William Rezel, all of whom deserved our thanks for their service.

Mention was also made of the website. David Blake had begun work with Prater Raines on a new website for the Association and hoped that it would be complete by the end of the year.

There had been a good deal of work with other organisations, in particular the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO), with Bishakha Mukherjee serving on its Steering Committee.

Stuart drew attention to the fact that Zoom gives the Association the ability to do more, especially in connecting members in different countries.

There were no questions or comments and the report was accepted by the meeting, proposed by Cheryl Dorall and seconded by William Rezel.

6. Treasurer's report. Richard Sisson presented the accounts for the financial year 2019. Income from subscriptions had been £1,655. Expenditure, mainly for the AGM and networking had been £1,284.82. The balance at the end of the year had been £4,642.370 excess., balance 4642.

For the period to date in 2020, income had been £1,572 and expenditure just £217. The balance to date was £5,997.24.

The accounts had again been audited by Rickie Sankar.

There were no questions and the accounts were approved, proposed by Amitav Banerji and seconded by Annie Carlton.

7. Election of officers and Executive Committee At the closing date, 13 November there candidates for 4 officers and 5 Committee members.

The following were elected:

Chair	Stuart Mole
Vice-Chair	Bishakha Mukherjee
Secretary	David Blake

Treasurer Richard Sisson

Committee

Members Shobhna Rattansi, Bobbie Dohunso-Tetty, Godson Okafor , Sharon Robinson and Sreetharan Vallipuram

8. Election of auditor Rickie Sankar was proposed as auditor of the accounts by Cheryl Dorall, with Annie Carlton seconding. His election was approved.

9. Institute of Commonwealth Studies Stuart spoke about the situation at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, which was under threat of closure. The University of London was conducting a consultation. The Institute was a unique institution, the only centre for Commonwealth Studies in the world. It was actually profitable with a budget surplus. The Commonwealth community had rallied to its defence and the Association had assisted with the letter to the University from four former Secretaries-General.

Bishakha. Mukherjee spoke about the involvement of IFCO in the process and briefly about the Association's involvement with the organisation, on whose Steering Group she sits.

The meeting was followed by a session entitled ***A Reflection on the life of Patsy Robertson*** who was the Association's founding chair and who held the post until she passed away in August 2020. It consisted of a series of short talks mainly by people who knew or worked with Patsy, including Baroness Scotland, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Stephen Chan, Dharani Rethnam, Hugh Craft, Cheryl Dorall, Lorna McLaren, Joel Kibazo and Richard Bourne. Patsy's son and daughter John and Sarah Robertson also spoke briefly about their mother.