



THE COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION

Staying engaged – promoting and fostering the Commonwealth

Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting held online using Zoom on Thursday 22 July 2021

1. The Chair, Stuart Mole, welcomed members from around the world who were present for the meeting. 94 people had registered for the AGM or the lecture. A few had not arrived, but sufficient members were present for the quota of 15 to be met.
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cheryl Dorall, Gurudas Bailur, Greg Covington, Asif Khan and Judy McNeill.

3. Minutes of the 2020 AGM

The minutes were accepted by the meeting as a correct record, proposed by Karen Brewer and seconded by Terry Dormer. Richard Sisson asked for a correction to be made at the end of the first paragraph of item 6, where '370 excess., balance 4642' needed to be removed.

4. Chair's report

Stuart Mole presented his Chair's report, which had been circulated to members in advance. He identified four items as being of particular importance:

- the Association's new website, which was now up and running
- the postponement of CHOGM
- the threat to close the Institute of Commonwealth Studies
- and the reduction in UK donor aid and development assistance.

Richard Bourne said that the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London, chaired by Sir Malcolm Rifkind, review had been due by the end of June, but had still not appeared. He suggested that a suitable memorial for Patsy Robertson would be the planting of a tree in the gardens of Marlborough House.

5. Treasurer's report

Richard Sisson presented the financial report which had been circulated in advance. Income from membership subscriptions had help up well at £1,692 and was slightly higher than in the previous year. There was a surplus of £1,475 for the year, which increased the balance in the General Fund to £6,092, but it was

important to note that owing to the pandemic there had been no social events and that a number of quite substantial invoices were in the offing.

Sir Peter Marshall proposed the adoption of the report. Annie Carlton seconded and the report was adopted.

6. Constitutional amendments

A number of constitutional amendments had been proposed by the Executive Committee and circulated in advance in the form of a copy of the Constitution with the amendments highlighted. Stuart Mole had requested that any questions about them should be sent in advance, but none had been received. The amendments were mainly non-controversial and included the creation of a membership officer and a returning officer, the recognition that meetings could be held either in person or virtually and the creation of procedures for the nomination and election of officers and Executive Committee members.

The proposals were adopted, proposed by Amitav Banerji, seconded by Raja Gomez and adopted with no-one against.

7. Elections

Sharon Robinson, Returning Officer, declared that, in the absence of any other nominations, all those proposed for posts and membership of the Executive Committee had been unanimously elected

Position	Nominee	Proposer	Secondeder
Chair	Stuart Mole	Sir Peter Marshall	Raja Gomez
Vice Chair	Bishakha Mukherjee	William Rezel	Ian Thomas
Secretary	David Blake	Richard Bourne	Amitav Banerjee
Treasurer	Richard Sisson	Gurudas Bailur	Ricki Sankar
Membership Secretary	Lorna McLaren	Cheryl Dorall	Terence Dormer
Member	Shobhna Rattansi	Dharani Rethnam	Carmaline Bandara
Member	Godson Okafor	Dharani Rethnam	KBK Rao
Member	Sree Vallipuram	William Rezel	Diana Bailey
Member	Felix Samuel	Mushtaq Zaman	Catherine Price

8. Appointment of auditor

Rickie Sankar was re-appointed as auditor of the Association's accounts. Proposed by Sir Peter Marshall, seconded by Dharani Rethnam.

9. Any other business

David Blake gave a brief presentation on the contents of the new website, running through the main pages one by one. He stressed that it was still work in progress and that in addition to updates, there would be new pages from time to time. Shobhna called for members to write articles for it.

Amitav Banerji asked what the situation was with regard to CHOGM. Nicholas Watts replied that there was a good deal of uncertainty.

Terry Dormer said that the postponement of CHOGM had led to an inability for the Commonwealth to properly prepare for COP26. It was important that the Commonwealth was closely associated with it and he urged that the Association should lobby for this.

There being no other business, the Chair declared the meeting closed.

The meeting was followed by the First Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture on *The People's Commonwealth*, given by the Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation, Dr Anne T. Gallagher AO.