



THE COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION

Staying engaged – promoting and fostering the Commonwealth

Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting held online using Zoom on Thursday 19 July 2022

1. The Chair, Stuart Mole, welcomed members from around the Commonwealth who were present online for the meeting. He regretted that owing to the heatwave in London, with temperatures of up to 38 degrees, it had not been possible to hold the meeting in person at Marlborough House, but he felt that it was better to hold the meeting online rather than not to hold it at all, or to postpone it until later in the year.

69 people had registered to attend the AGM and/or the lecture in person, of whom 52 (75%) were members and supporters and 17 were not (25%). Online attendance was not as high as hoped, comprising a total of just 36 people (52% of those who had registered), of whom 28 (77%) were members and supporters and 8 (23%) were not. However, the quota of 15 for the AGM was reached.

2. **Apologies for absence for the AGM** were received from Munawwar Alam, Rawwida Baksh, Domini Bingham, Chris Bowman, Karen Brewer, Hugh Craft, Max Gaylard, Raja Gomez, Elizabeth Hinks, Asif Khan, Judy McNeil, Godson Okafor, Rita Payne, William Rezel and Martin Smith.

Apologies for absence for the lecture were received from Jon Davies, Prof Luis Francheschi, Dr Anne Gallagher, Lord Luce, Dr Arjoon Suddhoo, Stephen Twigg and Brigid Watson.

3. **Minutes of the 2021 AGM**

The minutes of the previous year's meeting, which had been circulated in advance, were accepted by the meeting as a correct record.

4. **Chair's report**

Stuart Mole presented his *Chair's report*, which had been circulated to members in advance. He ran through the report, emphasising the following issues:

- the measures taken to commemorate Patsy Robertson, including the lecture in her name and the plan to plant a tree in her honour in the garden of Marlborough House
- the development and growth of the new website and the Comassoc Google Group

- the relationship between the Association and other Commonwealth organisations, including particularly the Independent Forum for Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO) and The Round Table
- the highly positive report on the future of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London
- the successful Round Table conference 'Is the Commonwealth Working?', in which a number of Association members played a key role

Stuart's report was accepted by the meeting.

5. Treasurer's report

Richard Sisson presented the *Accounts* for 2021, which had been circulated in advance. Income from membership subscriptions had risen from £1,692 in 2020 to £1,885 in 2021. Expenditure for the year was considerably up from £216 to £2,079, but this was explained by hefty sums for the new website, the subscription for Zoom and the design and printing of the membership leaflet. This rise had been anticipated at last year's AGM. There was a slight reduction in the surplus for the year of £5,897, which in the circumstances was good. It was important to note, however, that owing to the pandemic there had been no social events, which usually accounted for a substantial proportion of the Association's expenditure.

Richard's report was accepted by the meeting.

6. Elections

The following nominations for officers and committee members were accepted by the meeting:

Position	Nominee	Nominated by	Seconded by
Chair	Stuart Mole	Amitav Banerji	Cheryl Dorall
Vice Chair	Bishakha Mukherjee	Greg Covington	Sir Peter Marshall
Secretary	David Blake	Richard Bourne	Raja Gomez
Treasurer	Richard Sisson	K B K Rao	Praxede Weerasinghe
Membership Secretary	Lorna McLaren	Carmaline Bandara	Domini Bingham
Committee Member	Shobhna Rattansi	Dharani Rethnam	Judy McNeill
Committee Member	Rickie Sankar	K B K Rao	Elaine Ogilvie
Committee Member	Sree Vallipuram	Bobby Dohunso Tettey	William Rezel
Committee Member	Felix Samuel	Andrea David-Hugh-Kong	Godson Okafor

7. Appointment of auditor

Rickie Sankar was re-appointed as auditor of the Association's accounts.

8. Any other business

Mark Robinson spoke about the Kigali CHOGM, which he had attended. He was surprised that there was the longest communique that he could remember, with 117 clauses. He felt that the low attendance of Heads of Government and the admission of Togo and Gabon as almost a *fait-accompli* were both matters of concern. He reported on the re-election of Baroness Scotland as Secretary-General.

The meeting was followed by the Second Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture, which was given by Sir Malcolm Rifkind, former British Foreign Secretary and the Chair of the University of London's Committee to conduct an inquiry into the future of Commonwealth studies at the University of London. The inspiring and thoughtful lecture, which was about the future of the Commonwealth, is available on the Association's website and on its *YouTube* channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgA3UFvw7YU&t=528s>