

Paper H Minutes

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society
AGM

Forty-ninth Annual General Meeting of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society Ltd
Company Number: SC046605
Scottish Charity Number: SC002995

Date: Tuesday 21 August 2018 at 12:30pm

Venue: Playfair Hall, Royal College of Surgeons, Nicolson Street, Edinburgh

In attendance

Board of Directors

Tim O' Shea (Chair)
Anthony Alderson
Sharon Burgess
Fiona Davis
Judith Doherty
Richard Lloyd
Luke Meredith
Matt Panesh
Kate Smurthwaite
Luke Meredith
Pip Utton
Richard Wiseman
Collin Wood

Membership

Sally Cowling
Pete Forman
Frank Galbraith
JD Henshaw
Toby Mitchell
Alex Perry
Martin Powell
Stewart Reid
James Seabright
Robin Strapp
Ged Welch
Allan Woolfe
Marlene Zwickler

Public

Xela Batchelor
Muriel Cassie
Mariangela Cicciarella
Ted Donovan
Gabriel Dransfield
Brian Ferguson
Annie Forman
K Kaluhiokalani
Lawrence Marshall
Julie Mercik
Phil Miller
Julia Vidania

Fringe Society staff

Shona McCarthy (Chief Executive)
Eve Anderson (Website and Digital Development Manager)
Fiona Carr (Development Manager)
Jane Colton (Box Office Manager)
Helen Darling (EA to Chief Executive) (Minutes)
Oliver Davies (Head of Marketing, PR & Sponsorship)
Lyndsey Jackson (Director of Operations)
Brigid Kennedy (Marketing Manager)
Rae Kenny (Projects Officer)
Kevin Kimber (Venues and Companies Manager)
Matt Lord (Participant Support Officer)
Michelle Mangan (Senior PR and Marketing Manager)
Lyndsey McLean, (Community Engagement and Access Manager)
Fiona Payne (Designer)

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John Pettie (Technical Project Manager)
Rachel Sanger (Head of Participant Services)
Liam Upton (Media Manager)

Preamble

The Chair welcomed Fringe Society members and members of the public to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and explained that formal proceedings would be covered first from the agenda, followed by an introduction and a brief review of the year by the Chief Executive, followed by guest speaker Julia Vidania from LGBT Youth and then an informal question and discussion session after the conclusion of formal business.

The Board of Directors introduced themselves.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Board members Susan Morrison and Charlie Wood.

Notice

The Notice convening the meeting was taken as read. The Chair reminded any Members who had yet to vote in the election to do so immediately and allowed two minutes for final voting to be concluded.

Minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting were taken as read and approved subject to the following alterations:

- Jed Walsh to be listed as a Member.
- Xela Batchelor to be listed as a Member.
- Board member Pip Utton was not present and sent his apologies.

The Chair noted that if there were inaccuracies in recording the attendance of members and the public these would be amended.

Action: Fringe Society staff to check list of members and general public present and update 2017 minutes accordingly.

Decision: The minutes of the 2017 AGM were unanimously approved. Proposed by Martin Powell and seconded by James Seabright.

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Accounts

Copies of the Report and Financial Statements year ended 30 November 2017 had been made available.

The Chair invited Lyndsey Jackson, Director of Operations to present the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society 2017 accounts. Lyndsey noted that the year ended in a relatively healthy position having made a surplus of £112,000. The surplus was used to make key investments. In 2017, EFFS introduced Fringe Days Out, a give-away of Fringe Days Out (composed of ticket vouchers and bus travel_ through 26 charities across the city and £50,000 of our reserves was used for this purpose. Another significant investment with the surplus generated was the refurbishment of the street events footprint on the Royal Mile. Most of the income of the Fringe Society is generated by the services delivered and most of the costs are spent on delivering those services to participants and audiences. The Chair opened the floor to questions of a financial nature.

Question: James Seabright asked where in the accounts he could identify the total turnover, including all the commission and ticket sales.

Response: Lyndsey Jackson confirmed the turnover of the charity was £4.5 million and the total cost was £4.4 million. Lyndsey confirmed that page 15 of the accounts provided a good summary of income and expenditure.

Decision: The accounts were unanimously adopted. Proposed by Martin Powell and seconded by James Seabright.

Reappointment of auditors

The Chair proposed that Henderson Loggie be re-appointed.

Decision: The accounts were unanimously adopted. Proposed by Martin Powell and seconded by James Seabright.

The Chair declared the official business closed and invited Shona McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to provide an update on the Fringe Society's activities over the last year.

Chief Executive's report

Shona McCarthy provided a brief review of the Fringe Society's activities over the last 12 months. Plans were underway to ensure that the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society reaches its 75th anniversary in 2022 in good shape. The Fringe Society welcomed an open conversation

across the Fringe constituents about what the future might look like and has made many open invitations to the constituents of the Fringe and the sector.

Fringe Blueprint

The Fringe Blueprint emerged out of this series of conversations. The Fringe Blueprint highlights specific deliverables drawn from this plan, and seeks to provide a short, easy to understand document that outlines the vision of the Fringe Society. It has eight core goals - The Open Fringe, The World's Fringe, The Affordable Fringe, The Fringe Home, The Inspiration Fringe, The Street Fringe, The Green Fringe and The Fringe Story. Some of the goals such as affordability of the Fringe and cost of accommodation are ambitious but would offer a breakdown of real barriers to participants, particularly artists and performers. The Inspirational Fringe is a genuine commitment to work with young people. This is not just an audience development or artist development piece, instead it focusses on power of the arts and in the power of engagement with creative learning, to help young people develop understanding, empathy, and be better citizens in an ever-turbulent world.

The Fringe Society have temporarily shelved the schools' poster competition, the longest running schools engagement programme in Scotland, after 38 years, and are now engaging in a year-long conversation with teachers, headteachers and schools, to understand better how we can make a direct connection between schools and young people.

In terms of Access Fringe, Lyndsey Jackson mentioned the Fringe Society's big giveaway last year which was an investment in free access for people around the city and 26 charities were chosen from areas with the highest social deprivation where people were least likely to engage with the Festivals.

There are many elements to this Festival that people find challenging, in terms of affordability. The Fringe Society had made a commitment to freeze the registration fees for the last 12 years and this board has committed that the freeze will continue for the duration of the 2019-2023 Business Plan. The Fringe Society have also made a commitment to lower the commission on ticketing 4% to 3% over the lifetime of this plan.

The Chief Executive extended an open invitation to members of the Fringe Society and the public to come forth with ideas and participate in an ongoing conversation which will culminate with the Society making real inroads with these commitments by 2023.

Lastly, the Chief Executive added that it had been an absolute privilege to work with the Fringe Society for the third year in a row, and paid massive tribute to the team and thanked them for

hard work which was way over the odds. The Chair also paid tremendous tribute to the Chief Executive and her team for quite an extraordinary success.

Guest speaker

The Chair introduced the guest speaker Julie Vidiana, Community Development Officer, LGBT Youth Scotland. Julie Vidiana thanked the Fringe Society for inviting her to speak. She confirmed that LGBT Youth Scotland was one of the charities that benefitted from funding of £1,800 as well as tickets that provided free bus travel throughout the Lothians and this had a significant impact on LGBT young people. LGBT Youth Scotland support young people from 13-25 years who struggle with poverty, social exclusion and anxiety issues. The money provided by the Fringe Society enabled 130 young people to attend live Fringe shows for the first time and move about freely throughout the city. It also meant that one of their young people had been able to perform in the Fringe for the first time. About 95% of the young people taken to shows had never been to one before. Julie Vidiana noted that for the first time, these LGBT young people saw themselves represented at the Fringe.

The Chair thanked Julie for her inspiring and beautifully expressed words.

The Chair opened the meeting to an informal question and answer session.

Open session

Question: James Seabright introduced himself as a Fringe Society member and independent commercial producer. Mr Seabright thought the Fringe Blueprint was great and set out some ambitious and exciting targets for the coming years and was delighted to be involved in his 20th Fringe as a producer. Mr Seabright drew the attention of the Board to the affordability of the Fringe specifically about box office commission being reduced. He conceded it was a great thing to reduce the cost of the Fringe's commissions to artists, but wondered whether that money, that 25% of the commission pot, might be better spent on the Society fulfilling a lot of the other objectives in the Blueprint such as accommodation, spiralling costs of venue licensing, etc.

Response: The Chair asked members of the Board to respond. Fiona Davis (Board member) confirmed that the Fringe Society were in the process of developing a plan based on the initiatives set out in the Blueprint, understanding income and cost drivers and the pace at which the Fringe Society could set out to achieve those targets.

The Chair thanked Mr James Seabright and confirmed that his comments would certainly inform the Fringe Society's thinking.

Question: Pete Forman (Fringe Society member) raised the issue of the Virgin Money half price hut listings. He pointed out that Virgin Money huts sell tickets until 21:00 and re-open at 10:00 the next morning. During that period, the listings are taken down. He confirmed he was passing on this query from somebody else who he was speaking to recently. He asked if the shows could still be listed even though the tickets could not actually be bought?

Response: Lyndsey Jackson responded to the query. She confirmed there had been a bit of confusion around that issue but the Fringe Society would digest all the different bits of feedback around that issue, pick through it with the digital team and box office team and come up with a solution that would help customers find more shows.

Question: Silver introduced himself as a performer at the Edinburgh Festival for the last 33 years. He raised a query about two big spaces, the High Street and the Speakers' Corner on the mound. He declared the mound is a disaster area and that a fence was put up to keep scruffy street performers out. Silver stated that the street performers used to manage themselves before RBS and Virgin Money got involved. Silver asked if the Fringe Society could remove the fence?

Response: The Chief Executive informed Silver that it had nothing to do with RBS and Virgin Money, it is the Edinburgh Council who provide licenses and determine place restrictions on what parts of the public realm can or cannot be used. The Chief Executive stated that this year the High Street underwent significant changes. The Fringe Society's role in managing the street actually created a sustainability for the street performers. New stages and accessibility platforms were created and autism packs were handed out to support people with autism on the street, all of which was really well received. She agreed, however that there is still work to be done on the Mound and that the Fringe Society would prioritise increasing support for street performances on the Mound in 2019.

The Chief Executive asked Oliver Davies, Head of Marketing, PR & Sponsorship if he had anything to add? Oliver Davies confirmed that a lot of work had been done on the High Street and it was not extended to the Mound because the National Galleries of Scotland have a long-standing application to redevelop their footprint on the Mound, and as a consequence of that, it was decided to hold off redevelopment. It is not clear what the impact is going to be, but it will change that space to some extent.

Any other business

There was no further business to discuss.

The Chair thanked all those present for their attendance and engagement, expressed his appreciation of fellow board members and intense admiration of the team who work full-time for the Fringe.

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The Chair declared the 2018 Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society AGM closed.