

The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Report of the AGM held in Lancaster, 26th-27th May 2018



Voting for Change

An account of the 2018 AGM and how it affects the Coventry Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers

This year's AGM of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) was held in Lancaster. It had a different feel and focus to previous years, as it was held in a University over two days, rather than one. Additional events and seminars were also available, having much more an impression of a Road Show rather than merely a business meeting.

Last year's meeting was billed as a once in a generation opportunity to bring change to the governing body and this year it was the chance to review

progress made and to vote on the revised rules being proposed for the Council's future.

There were 162 members present at the meeting, out of a total membership of 189. This was lower than the previous meeting held in Edinburgh. There are 66 Guilds or Associations with representatives on the Council. 32 Guild were fully represented, 29 partially represented and 5 not at all. The Coventry Guild was fully represented with Joy Pluckrose, Chris Mew, Becki Johnson and Annie Hall attending on your behalf. Members are elected for 3 years, and this is the second year of the current triennium. As a newbie last year, I felt there was certain amounts of bullying to give change a chance, but with 12 months more experience, I felt more confident to make an informed decision regarding the proposed changes.

The Committee responsible for compiling the new rules had consulted widely on members' hopes and expectations. On behalf of the Guild, I had sent in a number of observations reflecting my concerns. Chris Mew had also been busy on our behalf and you may have read some of his articles in the Ringing World.

The revised rules had been published in the Ringing World and had been available on line for a number of weeks, so there was no excuse for not being familiar with their content. They do not address the thornier issues of a smaller Council, direct membership or professional support. As you can imagine there was a wide discussion with strong opinions expressed on all sides. There was a separate vote to see if the Council should vote for the changes by a secret ballot, but after a unanimous vote against, it was agreed the customs of the Council would be upheld and a show of hands would decide the outcome.

It was a landslide victory for change! 137 members voted for the motion, 8 against and 10 abstentions.

The new rules change the governance of the Central Council. They merge the old committees into new Workgroups. The Council is now led by an Executive

of eight Trustees, to whom the Workgroups are responsible. There are currently 5 Workgroups, but there could be more if required. The Executive is empowered with a greater range of activities between the Annual meetings of the Council.

Later, after a secret ballot the final members of the Executive were announced. Clyde Whittaker, Phillip Barnes, Alison Everett and David Smith were elected. They join the President Christopher O'Mahony, Deputy President David Kirkcaldy, Secretary Mary Bone and Treasurer Andrew Smith to create the Executive.

So that's the end of the beginning. Let's hope the new nimble Council allows for quicker decision making and a simpler structure to provide services to ringers and ringing.

New Strategic Objectives

Like all forward-looking organisations, CCCBR have agreed a mission statement:

To be the strategic leader and public voice of the ringing community, the arbiter of standards; and to promote an environment where ringing can flourish.

In addition, they have outlined the following strategic objectives:

1. To recruit and develop new learners and new leaders
2. To engage maturely with the Church and other relevant stakeholders
3. To continue to raise positive public awareness of ringing
4. To celebrate and promote the historical legacy of ringing
5. To promote excellence in standards

6. To increase direct participation in the central ringing organisation's activities

New Working Groups

In the new CCCBR there will be 5 Working Groups and the Exec have now appointed the following leaders and determine to whom they will report.

Workgroup	Leader	Executive Sponsor
Volunteer and Leadership Development	Tim Hine(Staffordshire)	David Smith
Technology and Taxonomy	Graham John (Berkshire)	Christopher O'Mahony
Communications and Marketing	Louise Nightingale(Kent)	Alison Everett
Stewardship ad Management	Alison Hodge(Worcestershire)	David Kirkcaldy
Historical and Archive	Doug Hird (Buckinghamshire)	Mary Bone

Over the next few months, the Workgroup Leads will be consulting widely among Council members, and in the ringing community, to scope out the activities of each group. This exercise will include invitations to participate in specific aspects of work. Workgroup Leads are also liaising with Council's previous Committee Chairs, mapping existing Council services to the new Workgroups and developing budgets. Workgroup activity statements will be circulated as soon as possible.

Impact on the Coventry Diocesan Guild

In summary, I think the old rules could have been described as the rules of a Gentlemen's club. The new rules have created a top down organisation, readily approved by the Charity Commission. They reflect the way most Bell Ringing Organisations operate. They allow for non-members of the CC to become involved with Working Groups which should allow for people with specific skills to make a contribution. If you would like to get involved with one of the Working Groups, please let me know.

Annie.hall@sky.com