

Report on possible review of Dress Code.

At a meeting of the WCCC Committee in June 2018. I undertook to canvass the choir to find out if they were content with the current Dress code, whether it was still fit for purpose or if there were any changes that might be considered.

In recent years there has been a relaxation of the Code by some members that was a source of irritation to others. There was a vocal minority, within all voices, that were concerned with the image this relaxation was projecting of the choir to the public. The main causes of concern were the variety of hem length, the degree of jewellery worn and blouses with too much 'sparkle'.

I was helped by Sarah Shellard, Stella Tipper and Rebecca Jones who agreed to approach the ladies on my behalf. Emails were sent out asking for comments on the dress code, its relevance and any changes that could be considered. Responses came as a mix of emails and face-to-face conversations.

We received 7 replies from the ladies (27% Of female membership) and 8 from the men (62% of male membership). The choir strength at time of the email was 38.

The men of the Choir have, within the last 18 months, adopted black shirts and trousers for concerts, a style that is not in the constitution. This has been well received by the men and will continue. This change was sanctioned by the Music Director and will be introduced as a change to the constitution at the AGM next year for ratification. It does not replace Dinner Jackets which will be reserved for the more formal concerts.

Overall the men were content with the code as it stands. One suggestion for academic style robes was made but, as well as not appealing to many, would be too costly.

The 7 ladies who responded to our tell us what you think " email provided many ideas for changes to the code .

3 said that the Constitution was fine as it was and just needed to be followed.

- 4 supported the introduction of black trousers
- 2 spoke out strongly against the introduction of trousers with one Soprano stating that she would leave the choir if they were introduced.
- 3 stated that in joining a choir or club one accepted the rules on dress. A Bowling Club was cited as an example in that 'Whites' are always worn and have to be bought by new members.

- 3 opted for black skirts of ankle length
- 2 suggested skirt lengths between below knee to ankle.
- 1 asked to get rid of the scarves.
- 2 wanted a change of scarves as the current material was too hot and slippery and they are out of fashion.
- 1 didn't care either way.
- One respondent identified the need for the choir to 'flow' when walking/processing when considering skirt length.

When I approached the MD for his thoughts on the Dress Code, he pointed out that the Chamber Choir was the only Cathedral affiliated choir that was not robed and as such we needed to maintain as much of the solemnity of the services as possible. Part of this is achieved with as much uniformity as possible and by mimicking the robes of the clergy and other choirs by an ankle length skirt for the ladies.

My conclusion is that the Dress Code elicits strong feelings within a few of the membership, although it is basically fit for purpose. Although there is a significant minority calling for the introduction of trousers in the ladies, a similar number are against them. Scarves are another bone of contention with a few and should be looked at in the future.

Uniformity of dress, both male and female, is important to a choir such as ours simply because we are a choir. A group of singers creating beautifully blended music with no one individual standing out. The dress code is there for a reason and I for one, as your chairman, feel we need to follow it.

Phil Crowther

Chairman