

Minutes of Cowton Arts & Theatre Society Annual General Meeting held in East Cowton Church Annex at 7:00pm on Saturday 13th June 2026

Committee Members Present: Nick Smith (Chairman), John Shields (Secretary), Susan Shields (Treasurer), Jane Green, Elaine Simpson, Pat Watson, Geoff Green, Margaret Walton.

Apologies: Tracey Cramond, Paul Bramley

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS – Nick began by thanking the committee for their input, hard work and support over the past year. He stated that since the last annual general meeting (AGM) we have staged another successful pantomime, Ali Baba, which feedback from members of the community suggests was well received and enjoyed by those attending.

He went on to thank the cast, directors, producers and backstage staff stating that, without the help of these volunteers, none of our productions could take place. Nick mentioned that CATS have more actors and other volunteers than we have ever had before and it is hoped this support will continue. He particularly thanked Elaine Simpson and her team of costume makers for continuing to produce such fantastic costumes for our events.

SECRETARY'S REPORT – John endorsed Nick's comments and added that at a recent committee meeting, CATS had decided to look at trying to put on more events. He stated that cast members had made two requests which were being considered by the committee. The first of these was that two additional small flood lights be purchased. John explained Paul had pointed out that when cast members were coming up the village hall from the back as part of the performance, they were in darkness as the current lights face directly onto the stage. The second request was that the purchase of a set of head-worn microphones be considered to avoid the distraction of cast members having to go to the wings to collect/return the current hand-held mics. Both requests are currently being considered and a decision will be made once these have been costed (see Treasurer's Report).

John stated that a new village website, commissioned by the Parish Council (PC), was underway and it was hoped this would go live soon. The PC hoped this would serve a central information source as it would include contributions from a variety of groups and businesses within the parish. John confirmed that CATS had contributed to this project and would have a presence on it (see Treasurer's Report for further information).

TREASURER'S REPORT - The report for 2025-26 shows that CATS continues to be in a sound place to meet future commitments.

Points of note are that:

- our balances have remained healthy, which has allowed us to meet the heavy financial commitment of replacing the projector which, for those who noticed it's sporadic outages, was well overdue;
- thanks to Mrs Simpson showing some eminent thrift in her reuse of costumes which kept the costume budget for Ali Baba low.

We have agreed to amalgamate the CATS website into the new Parish Council website, along with other local businesses and community organisations and have earmarked £200 as our contribution. The website will be easier to manage and be in a central location alongside other village organisations and activities.

We are considering additional flood lighting to illuminate the area in the front of the stage and are currently costing the options. We expect that this may cost in the region of £150.

We have also been asked by cast members to consider the purchase of a set of head worn microphones. This is currently being researched and will be considered at a future CATS committee meeting.

CATS COMMITTEE – In accordance with CATS constitution, the current committee members stood down. With no new volunteers coming forward, current members were re-elected unopposed. Nick remains as Chairman, John as Secretary and Susan as Treasurer these having been proposed and seconded by those present. Tracey Cramond and Paul Bramley were unable to attend the meeting but had stated prior to the AGM that they were content to remain on the committee. Pat Watson has sadly resigned from the committee due to other commitments. Nick noted that Pat had been on the committee since CATS was re-established approximately 10 years ago and he asked that the thanks of the committee be recorded for all Pats help over this time.

PERFORMANCES - John stated that the draft script for the murder mystery had been completed and would be available once checking for typo's etc. had been carried out. It was confirmed that the proposed date for this event would be late October/early November.

Nick confirmed that the committee is currently looking at several suggestions regarding which pantomime to put on in 2027 and a decision will be taken in the near future.

Jane highlighted a request by the Cowtonfest committee that CATS consider putting on an event during the Cowtonfest bank holiday weekend in late August. This was discussed and it was agreed it be considered early in 2027 so that an event such as a murder mystery be staged, possibly on the Friday evening of that weekend.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – No issues were raised by those present.

AOB - No other business was raised and the meeting closed at 7:35pm.