Trustees of Sinodun Players CIO

(Charity Number: 1210415)

Minutes of the 19th Meeting held on 13 July 2026 at 7.45 pm

1. Apologies: Apologies were received from Emma Trotman and Mike Baker.

Present: Will Lidbetter (Chair), Martin Parr, Minaz Beddall, Martina Platts, Anna Garland, Nick Morley, Gloria Wright (CXWL Board), Caroline Malnick (SPC)

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting: Agreed and signed.

3. Matters Arising:

a) Generative AI Policy for SP Productions: Martin reported that no feedback had been received on the policy previously circulated, and it should therefore be regarded as final. It will be communicated by: publication in the CX Times, inclusion on the website under Policies and Procedures, inclusion in the Production Manual currently being updated by Abi Thornton. **Action:** Martin to follow up.

b) Data Protection and IT: the preferred supplier, **Ask 4 Support**, has now been engaged. Work on the physical IT infrastructure will begin during the theatre shutdown in mid-August, with software and user migration to follow.

4. Items to and from the CXWL Board

Gloria reported that:

- Cinema ticket prices will increase from 11 September 2026.
- Lloyds TSB has extended its foyer contract agreement until January 2027.
- Thames Travel has been approached regarding the poor readability of the bus information screens in CX foyer. The font and display will be improved. Once the new Market Place bus stop is operational with its own digital display, the existing CX screen will be removed.
- The FD of CXWL proposed that the outstanding £47,000 roof repair grant owed by CXWL to Sinodun Players should be repaid by offsetting the quarterly SP rent payments. The CXWL Board agreed to recommend this proposal to the Trustees.
- The July bank balance stood at £25,452.
- The draft 2026/27 budget was approved.
- Stephen Williams has met with a representative from Everywhen (previously Towergate) Insurance, who believes savings of approximately £1,000 per annum may be achievable on the CXWL insurance premium. This is being investigated.
- CXELAP Project: A site meeting was held with South Oxfordshire District Council on 23 June 2026, attended by a planning officer, a consultant and a representative from Theatres Trust. The discussions about the advertising light boxes were more positive than previous written responses from SODC. SODC will now prepare a further pre-planning report, which will be used in agreeing how the CX moves forward on this

issue. It was noted that Oxford Playhouse had obtained five-year planning permission for its external light boxes, which may provide a useful precedent.

- Mike Baker and Bruce Williams have identified two further architectural lighting suppliers for the CXELAP project, as only one out of four lighting providers had responded to the Request for Proposal.
- It was acknowledged that new external signage should refer to both Sinodun Players and the Corn Exchange. Gloria confirmed that this would be incorporated, potentially using the proposed lightbox signage above the entrance.
- Gloria has written to Henry Lester regarding water ingress affecting both properties from 4 Market Place. Lesters have agreed to contribute 50% of the scaffolding costs required for stonework repairs.
- An enquiry regarding a wrestling event has been declined.
- A new volunteer recruitment campaign will begin in the autumn. A Volunteer Open Day is proposed for 3 October 2026.
- Stephen Williams will be stepping down as Finance Director of CXWL; he is moving to Australia.
- Two further collaborations have been agreed with Five Little Pigs:
    - *Casino Royale* (November)
    - *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (December)

  In both cases, Five Little Pigs will hire the auditorium and carry the financial risk.

- Wednesday cinema matinees will resume in October when the clocks change.
- The Drama Festival generated expenditure of approximately £900 and income of approximately £1,500. Visiting companies again provided very positive feedback regarding the facilities and support received.

5. Items to and from SPC

Financials

- We have been bequeathed £1000 from the late Edith Payne.
- We have been bequeathed a 0.25% share of the residuary estate of Rognivald Harvard Gunn (best known as Ronnie Gunn!).
- Mix up of two Sum Up Machines has been resolved. It is calculated SP owe the CX £500.29.and that the CX owe SP £141.84.

SP Productions

- 2027 Pantomime has been confirmed as Alan Frayn's *The Snow Queen* directed by Poppy Jackson and Emma Trotman.
- Recent Encore production went very well despite concerns about the extreme heat and safeguarding 50 children. Thankfully, no incidents occurred. Diana Christie and Emma Trotman are commended for their time and dedication.
- A recent request from *The Underdog* team has highlighted the potential need to consider purchasing AC units for the backstage spaces in the future. Climate change and extreme heat are impacting cast, crew and audiences.

Incoming Shows

- Alter Eagles were hugely successful. SP's received £1013.95, ie 30% of box office takings. Booked again for Autumn 2027.

- New venture booking two Arts Council-funded children's matinee shows for October and November. If successful, we will look at further bookings for 2027. Evening cinema should be able to run on these days.
- Live Opera *Barber of Seville* performed by Merry Opera Company confirmed for 27th Feb 2027. £30.00/ticket price.

Social Events/workshops

- Chris Bertrand running two Saturday story times for 8/9 years upwards in JW Room. August 1st and August 9th.
- SPC have plans to hold a 'thank you' lunch/afternoon tea and cake in early September for the workshop team, but also as an opportunity to talk with the workshop volunteers to get a better idea of how best we can fill the post of Workshop Lead.

Comments for Lighting Project from the SPC

- The SPC do not feel 'considered' and feel strongly that the screen/light box above the door displays 'Sinodun Players', Corn Exchange

National Operatic and Dramatic Association Awards

- Julie Utley, Marilyn Johnstone and Rebecca Cleverley represented the SP's at the recent NODA AGM. We received certificates for district nominations for Rebecca Cleverley for *The Father* and for Best Traditional Pantomime for *Hansel & Gretel.*
- Chris Bertrand was the overall regional winner for his performance in *The Father.*
- We were very proud to receive the London Flame Award in recognition of our 'brave and varied programming' and 'inspirational contribution to the pursuit of excellence in theatre.' A big endorsement of our charitable objectives!
- It was suggested that Sinodun Players' recent success at the NODA Awards should be publicised in the local press. **Action:** Caroline to arrange.

6. Finance Update

Minaz presented the financial position covering 1 June–13 July 2026.

She highlighted:

- encouraging levels of Community giving;
- Membership subscriptions currently total £3,500, compared with the usual annual income of approximately £6,000. This will require monitoring, as some members may still be attempting to pay into the closed bank account. Many members remain listed on Membership Mojo as unpaid, and further follow-up will be undertaken by Dorothy Hirsch. Val Kent is also contacting Encore parents.

Ratification of CXWL Budget: The CXWL budget, provided by Stephen Williams, was unanimously approved.

Repayment of the £47,000 CXWL debt to Sinodun Players (roof grant): The Trustees discussed the proposal to repay this debt by suspending quarterly SP rent payments. Stephen Williams (FD) advised that repayment would take approximately three years under this arrangement. Minaz highlighted CXWL will accrue the debt reduction as income so they will still break even; however, they will need to draw on their cash reserves. However, CXWL

has produced a cautious budget which assumes no grant funding from SP for the external lighting project or stonework repairs.

The Trustees unanimously approved the proposal.

Shareholder Meeting: The shareholder meeting will be incorporated into the CXWL Board meeting on 7 September 2026. Anna Garland will represent the Trustees. A CXWL Board Director will minute the meeting and forward the minutes to Martina for publication on the website and presentation at the AGM.

7. Financial Stewardship

Mike Baker has raised concerns regarding both Stephen Williams (CXWL Finance Director) and Minaz Badal (SP Finance Trustee) stepping down simultaneously. The Trustees agreed this presented both an operational and governance risk and should be added to the Risk Register. Positive efforts were being made by a number of people to find replacements; this will be reviewed again at the August and September CXWL Board meetings and the September SP CIO meeting.

8. Membership

Will advised that the Membership Team continues to meet and that there is broad agreement on the required approach. A volunteer day has yet to be scheduled because of production commitments and summer holidays. A date will be agreed as soon as possible.

9. Safeguarding

Two safeguarding reports circulated by Emma Trotman were noted.

a) The report concerning excessive temperatures during the June Encore production led into the later discussion on air conditioning.
b) Regarding concerns raised about a volunteer, no formal complaint has been received. The SPC Chair, CXWL Chair and Trustees who had experience of the individual considered them to be an appropriate volunteer and agreed that the current actions being taken were appropriate.

A grievance has been raised regarding a member of *The Underdog* for using inappropriate language. Len Pannett (*Underdog* Production Buddy) and Caroline met with complainant to discuss the concerns raised. The grievance has been referred to Tracy Noble for further investigation and handling in accordance with the grievance procedure.

10. Air Conditioning

Will introduced a discussion regarding climate change and cooling the Corn Exchange building. Gloria advised that:

- There is currently no practical location for plant equipment;

- The required air changes per hour make full auditorium cooling technically unfeasible.
- Portable air-conditioning units are only practical where suitable ventilation is available.

The Trustees acknowledged that rising temperatures are likely to become an increasing challenge. The impact may not just be discomfort, but falling ticket sales and the difficulty of getting volunteers to work/act in productions or service the performances. CXWL will continue to monitor technological developments, feasibility and costs.

The Trustees agreed that this should remain under review over the coming years; consideration could be given to providing a designated cooled area within the building, e.g., for rehearsals, rather than full auditorium air conditioning.

11. 4 Market Place

Will gave a brief update on discussions around the future of 4 Market Place.

12. LinkedIn

Len Panett has suggested that some volunteers would like to identify themselves on LinkedIn as volunteers with Sinodun Players. **Action:** Will will ask Len to arrange for both Sinodun Players and Corn Exchange Wallingford Ltd to be added as organisations on LinkedIn.

A short item will also appear in the CX Times explaining that volunteers can update their LinkedIn profiles to include CXWL and SP.

13. Risk Register

Will will circulate the Risk Register for review.

The Trustees agreed that two additional risks should be recorded:

- The simultaneous departure of the Finance Trustee and Finance Director from SP and CXWL;
- The increasing impact of climate change, particularly the need for cooling within areas of the Corn Exchange building.

14. Any Other Business

Caroline asked whether Trustees felt SP ticket prices should increase. Currently £12.00 for first night and matinee performances, £15.00 for Wed to Saturday performances. Pantomime all performances £10.00 for 2 to 16 years, Adult prices £15.00 Tues/Wed, £18.00 Thurs/Fri/Sat. There were no strong views, although Trustees agreed that an increase in pantomime ticket prices may be appropriate. This will be discussed further at the September SPC meeting.

Caroline advised that Mike Baker has prepared an analysis of ticket sales since 2016, showing attendance levels consistently around 60%. This will be circulated.

There will be no SPC meeting in August.

Nick advised that he will attend the National Drama Festivals Association event in Bromsgrove later this month on behalf of the Little Theatre Guild. He suggested that Sinodun Players should consider ticking/unticking the box on their applications for the Henley and ODN Drama Festivals next year, so they may be considered for entry if they are winners/high scorers at either.

Nick confirmed that he will stand down as a Trustee at the September AGM. He is willing to stand again for election.

Minaz will retire as a Trustee at the September AGM and will not seek re-election.

Dates of Future Meetings (at 7.30 pm unless otherwise stated)

Sinodun Players CIO: Tuesday 8 September 2026, 7.45 pm

AGM: Wednesday 30 September 2026, 7.45 pm

CXWL Board

- Monday **3 August 2026** – Nick Morley attending
- Monday **7 September 2026** – Anna Garland attending
- Monday **5 October 2026** – Will Lidbetter attending

SPC

- Wednesday **2 September 2026** – Mike Baker attending
- Wednesday **7 October 2026** – Mike Baker attending

Will Walker

8 September 2026