

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 13 June 2024

Present:

Members: Ryland Lee (RL), Chairman; John Carr (JC) Deputy Chairman;
Steve Richardson (SR) Secretary; John Kay (JK), Treasurer; Clive Waterman ((CW) Musical Director;
Section Leaders (SLs): Arnie Howell (AH), Mike Jearey (MJ); Andrew Evans (AE)

Officers: Christopher Peck (CP) Health & Safety Officer;

Minutes: Steve Andrewes

01/24 Apologies were received from

Paul Moir (Bass Section Leader), Martin Butler (Concert Secretary) Nigel Shaw (Stage Manager)

02/24 Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record of the events which took place on 22 February 2024

03/24 Matters arising from the minutes:

AE confirmed that there were 4 advertising pull-ups available for our use, of which 2 were for the Young Singers Competition and 2 for general use. All of these were in good condition.

ACTION: Pull ups to be always loaded on van for use at concerts

The discussion regarding whether to progress the option of making the Minster Service RMVC only, was put on hold to be considered at a later date.

ACTION: Section Leaders are now to ensure that Line-ups for concerts are put in place in time for final rehearsals.

There is a need to ensure that line-ups are in place prior to final rehearsal before a concert.

RL confirmed that it would be more appropriate to present 50 year service awards at the rehearsal following AGM. This will not be made known generally until the night of the rehearsal.

ACTION: Those responsible for drinks to be informed that this is taking place.

The proposal to place music from our CD's on line is to be further discussed by AE and Chris Carr.

ACTION: AE to discuss with Chris Carr

The document outlining the proposal for achieving financially successful concerts was deferred in view of the need to have MB present as a part of the discussion process.

ACTION: Discussion to take place including MB

The recruitment video is being prepared by AE and still requires the recording on an interview with CW on screen, prior to being placed on the website.

ACTION: AE to complete prior to AGM

SR has completed sorting out of the documentation held in the lock-up, removing all of the minutes. The Borough Archivist has expressed an interest in looking at some of our records.

**RL to speak to John Painter re progressing this matter.
AE to discuss with John Adams which documents are likely to be of greatest interest to Borough Archivist**

JK requested agreement to destroy all financial documentation above 7 years old, in line with legal requirements. The action was agreed by the Committee.

JK to proceed with destruction of documentation above 7 years old.

CW informed the committee that he has many years of programmes stored.

ACTION: CW to speak to AE re digital storage.

RL confirmed that he has spoken to all members currently undertaking roles to confirm their agreement to continue for a further season.

04/24 RMVC Chairman's Report

So to my final Chairman's committee report (only the AGM to go!) This report reflects on the activities and events since our last meeting in February. It includes moments of achievement, joy and sorrow.

One of the highlights of the 'Spring term' was the successful auditions of our second Young Singers' competition - with the Gala concert to come on 6th July. This event not only showcased

the incredible talent of the younger generation but also fostered a connection within our community. Witnessing the raw talent of our young participants was truly inspiring and I hope that this competition will flourish for years to come.

Additionally, our concert tour to Bulth Wells stands out as a significant accomplishment and was

a resounding success. The warm welcome we received, coupled with our excellent performances created lasting memories for all involved. The tour was not only a testament to

our musical talent, but also an opportunity for us to bond as a choir. All of this was due to the hard work and dedication of our members and music professionals.

However, it is with a heavy heart that I acknowledge the loss of two valued choristers - Seb Boston and Stephen Dale, Their contribution to the choir, both vocally and through their spirit will be deeply missed. We honour their memory and the joy they brought to the choir.

As I step down, I do so with immense pride for all that this committee has achieved. It has been

an absolute privilege to serve as your Chairman over the past three years. I would like to extend

my heartfelt thanks to you, the committee, for your unwavering support, hard work and commitment. Your dedication and tireless efforts have been the backbone of our successes and

challenges and I am deeply grateful for your support.

I wish the committee all the best for the future. I am confident that under your guidance the choir

will continue to thrive and reach even greater heights. Once again, thank you for the privilege of serving as your Chairman.

Warmest Regards

Ryland

RL thanked all of the Committee Members and Officers for their dedicated and tireless efforts during his term of Office.

CW, on behalf of the Committee, requested thanks be given to RL for his Chairmanship during a difficult period. This was echoed by all present.

05/24 Section Leaders Reports

Tenor 1 Report

During the first half of 2024, we lost two longstanding and much-loved members, Seb Boston, who passed away in February, and Pat Connell who is no longer able to sing with us. We also lost Ken Lunnon's wife, Mamie, in April, to add to a sombre start to the year for the choir family.

Clive Willey has been on a long-term health related leave-of-absence (his mobility is compromised) but I am hoping he will return in the new choir year, possibly with support from the men.

The T1s continue to have 12-14 members at rehearsals and typically 12 members singing at concerts.

Mike Jearey

Tenor 2 Report.

The section continues to be having a fairly uneventful existence. Nigel appears to be back from his travels for the time being. John Oversby continues to defy the odds, thankfully. We currently have 16 members, which is a quite sufficient number. David Ewens's sight has come to the point where he has to rely almost entirely on memory but he continues to fight on.

We had a get-together at Henry Street gardening centre in February and we will be doing the same in a couple of week's time. For myself I am happy to continue for another year as T2 lead if no-one objects; however I would like for somebody else to take over after that.

T.A.Howell

Baritone Report

Andrew Evans, 6 June 2024

In early April we heard of the death of Stephen Dale who tragically died while on holiday with his family in Peru. Stephen was a fine singer, a kind and gentle person and a really valued member of the Baritones. He is missed. A large number of choristers attended his funeral on 10 May in Caversham.

Currently, the baritone section is 15 members. We need to recruit two or three more to join us.

Bass Section Leader's Report

There have not been a lot of changes in the bass section since the last committee meeting.

Simon Walker is starting to feel more confident in his singing which is good news and he has suggested he'll be ready to sing in the next concert.

Paul Buckle has been absent for a few rehearsals of late. Paul is waiting for the NHS to begin dealing with a lung/breathing issue he has. Unfortunately singing makes him cough. Unsurprisingly he finds this embarrassing and it seems unlikely we will see him until the issue has been dealt with.

Paul Moir

RL requested that section Leaders' reports for the AGM contain historical information reflecting on the 203-24 season.

ACTION: Section Leaders to take note

Treasurers Report 08/24

CURRENT BALANCES

Here is where we stand financially as of 31st May 2024, and my projections for the year to 31 May 2025.

Balance at the end of:	May 23	31 May 24	May 25
	Actual	Actual	Projected
<u>Account:</u>	£	£	£
Assets	18	18	18
Debtors	-	-	-
Metro Bank Current Account	9,478	7,241	5,543
Metro Bank Reserve Account	17,554	17,755	19,467
Metro Bank Tours & Events Account	0	14.21	0
Cash and cheques	0	0	0
Creditors	-	-	-
TOTAL	27,050	25,028	25,028
RESERVES (<i>net current assets</i>)	27,032	25,010	25,010

The balance as at the end of May 2023 is as in the Annual Report and Accounts. Reserves are as defined by the Charities Commission. They are represented in our accounts by the subtotal Net Current Assets. Since we write down our fixed assets to nominal values, in most years our total balances only slightly exceed our reserves.

In November 2022, the Committee agreed to increase our long-term Reserves target to £17,500. In addition, the Committee agreed to set aside £2,500 'protected funds' to ensure the continuation of the Gwyn Arch Young Singers competition in future years.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

The Choir performed in only 4 charity concerts during the year which raised c. £6,000 for the various charities in addition to the Young Singers Gala Concert and two performances during a Choir visit to mid-Wales:

There was a total of 65 paying members during this year generating a combined subscription/tuition fee income of £8,841 (£599 below budget).

The result for the FY23/24 is that expenditure exceeded income by £2,021 compared to a 'loss' of £1,949 anticipated in the budget approved by the AGM in July last year (i.e. £72 'over' budget). Net Core expenditure was £-2,587 and Net Non-Core income was £566. These results have been approved by our independent examiner(TBC).

Main variance -v- budget were as follows:

Income: Membership subscriptions and related income (Tuition Fees and Gift Aid Refund) were £639 below budget. Sponsorship and donations were £1,957 below budget following the Committee decision not to seek additional sponsorship for the Young Singers competition this year.; Concert fees and ticket sales were £1,360 above budget due to YS Gala Concert ticket sales not included in the budget. Sundry Income was £514 over budget mainly due to income from the Reading Community Lottery.

Expenditure: Publicity and Concert Expenses were £420 above budget due to hiring an unplanned accompanist for the Parkinsons concert; Administration was £580 over budget due to Making Music membership and email addresses.

PROPOSED BUDGET 2024/5

I have continued to follow a financial strategy of reducing our excess Reserves whilst evolving a sustainable financial operating model. Currently, our core income is not sufficient to cover our core expenditure and I have attempted to develop a budget that provides opportunity to improve that situation by focussing on increasing our income stream rather than attempting to cut costs (there are few obvious opportunities to achieve the latter in any event!). Bear in mind that, based on our current expenditure profile, our subscriptions would need to be in the region of £175 to £180 in order to cover our anticipated costs.

I have attached my proposed draft budget for the year 2024/25 for consideration and recommendation by the Committee. I have made the following main assumptions:

- We will deliver 7 fee paying concerts at a fee of £400 each – except the Christmas concert at the Minster where I have assumed £350 as our 'share' of the fee.
- We will net £850 from the YS Gala Concert (based on last year's figures).
- Membership will remain at current levels.
- We will continue to receive funds from the Reading Community Lottery
- Subscriptions will increase by 5% to £147 including £20 Tuition Fees.
- MDs Honoraria will increase by 3%.
- Our trip to Cornwall and any 'Events' will be self-funding.
- We will arrange and deliver a concert (probably in April 2025) to generate funds of £1,000 net to our account.

You will see that this budget will deliver a balanced budget for the year; core expenditure would be £2,143 fully offset by non-core income of £2,143. Our Reserves would remain at current levels – about £3,000 above our Reserve target plus Young Singers allocation (£2.5K).

POSSIBLE BUDGET 2025/26

Assuming we proceed as outlined above and we follow a similar financial strategy, I have attempted to develop a possible budget for the year ending 31st May 2026 which would further reduce our excess Reserves whilst moving towards a sustainable and balanced financial model.

Significant assumptions in this possible budget:

- We will perform 8 fee paying concerts during the year and that our fees will remain at £400.
- Membership will remain at current levels.
- We will continue to receive funds from the Reading Community Lottery
- Subscriptions would increase by 12% to £165.00 including £25.00 Tuition Fees.
- Any Tour or Event will be self-funding.
- No further significant expenditure is anticipated in this financial year.

At this level our Reserves would reduce to £24,680 about £2,200 above our long-term target (£22,500 at 2022 prices assuming 3% inflation for the year and the £2.5K YS allocation is retained). Net Core expenditure would be £1020, offset by net non-Core income of £690, delivering a deficit of £330.

In summary, in the absence of significant opportunities to reduce costs and in a continuing difficult environment to secure concert engagements that attract audiences at a realistic ticket price, there are few alternative strategies but to increase subscriptions to a level that can sustain the Choir's financial long-term health (c. £180 p.a. at current prices),

This excludes the probability of gaining additional sponsorship for the YS Competition which we intend to run again in 2026.

We have some flexibility to determine the rate of such increases and the Committee should keep this matter under review to determine what such an acceptable rate should be and to consider what actions could be taken to increase our annual income.

John Kay

13th June

2024

Reading Male Voice Choir

Statement of Financial Activities for the year to 31 May

PROPOSED BUDGET to 31 May 2025 and POSSIBLE to 31 May 2026

	to May 2025		to May 2026	
	Income	Expense	Income	Expense
	£	£	£	£
Funds Generated				
*Members' subscriptions	7954		8768	
*Members' tuition fees	1240		1550	
*Tax refunds on Gift Aid	1830		2017	
*Weekly choir raffle	1200		1300	
<i>Sponsorship</i>	0		0	
<i>Donations and legacies</i>	100		100	
Subtotal: Funds Generated	12,324		13,735	
Income from Choir Activities				
<i>Concert fees</i>	2,800		3200	
<i>Sales: concert tickets</i>	1850		0	
<i>Sales: programmes</i>	175		200	
<i>Sales: CDs, tapes</i>	100		100	
<i>Refreshments (net)</i>	0		0	
Subtotal: Income from Choir Activities	4925		3,500	
Other Income				
<i>Bank &c interest</i>	150		50	
<i>Contributions: uniform</i>	0		0	
<i>Sundry income</i>	528		0	
Subtotal: Other Income	678		50	
Costs of Generating Funds				
<i>Fundraising, publicity</i>		520		520
Subtotal: Costs of Generating Funds		520		520
Costs of Choir Activities				
<i>Concert expenses</i>		300		300
<i>Producing programmes</i>		140		140
<i>Recordings</i>		0		0
<i>Gwyn Arch Young Singers</i>		1200		1200
Subtotal: Costs of Choir Activities		1,640		1,640
Support Costs				
*Musical Directors		9597		9885
*Hire of rehearsal hall		3500		3500
*Music		500		500
<i>Uniform</i>		500		500
<i>Equipment, transport</i>		900		900
<i>Depreciation</i>		0		0

Subtotal: Support Costs		14,997		15,285
Management and Administration				
*Administration		500		500
*Trustees' expenses		100		100
*Insurance		170		170
<i>Sundry expenses</i>		<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
Subtotal: Management and Administration		770		770
TOTALS	17,927	17,927	17,285	18,215
*NET Core		2,143		1,020
NET Non-Core	2,143		90	
NET TOTAL		0		930

JK informed the Committee that the Accounts have been signed off by the Independent Examiner.

In spite of only 4 concerts taking place in the last year the Choir raised over £6,000 for Charities.

JK raised concern that the Choir now had only 65 paying members (down for 70 last year), and that failure to recruit would impact the financial situation.

The accounts are more or less on Budget, but are 'losing height' and consideration needs to be given to how to achieve a break even situation.

The Committee were appraised of the benefits of the Reading Community Lottery, from which we received over £500 in the last year. The simple process was explained and it was agreed that MB should update the Choir at the following rehearsal to encourage more to take part.

ACTION: MB to address Choir at forthcoming rehearsal

There is an overrun of expenditure in respect of Licences, E-mail changes etc.

In respect of the Budget for 2024/5 JK informed that we have too much in Reserves and we need to consider how we can effectively evolve a sustainable model by increasing income, as opposed to cutting costs.

The Budget includes a fund raising event, (say, in April) to boost our own funds.

RL suggested that we use events like 'Young Singers' to increase ticket sales, i.e. from attendance by parents etc.

Subscriptions are budgeted to increase by 5% for the new season, which is very competitive in respect to similar choirs. JK informed that the new fee of £147 should be nearer £180, which we could achieve in 3 years by evolving a model.

Honoraria is to be increased by 3%.

At the AGM JK will request agreement to the following:-

Adoption of the Annual Report and receipts and payments.

Approval of the Budget (Recommended by the Committee)

Agreement to the continuation of the current Independent Examiner.

All Trustees agreed to the above, and RL expressed his thanks to JK for his complex work over the last year.

07/24 Musical Directors Report

Before I begin to get into any detail can I offer my sincere thanks to the many members who have helped me look after, move and set up the piano equipment since my health scare at the beginning of this year. Your support and caring attitude have meant a lot to me. Things are not completely back to normal yet but through your efforts I can continue as normal!

Several events have particularly featured during this period. Firstly came the sad death of Seb, the 'father of the Choir' having given 40 years of wonderfully dedicated service. Later came the sad and unexpected death of Stephen Dale. Other choir members have also experienced sad family losses, but throughout, the strength of the Choir's sensitive, kind and caring attitude has done much to give support where and when it was needed.

On the plus side, we have enjoyed the well planned and organised trip to Wales where we sang in Brecon Cathedral, and performed a concert with the Bluith MVC. This was a great weekend, despite some wet weather, which gave us many great experiences.

We have performed a very good concert to a full Trinity Church, Lower Earley last evening. My thanks to all who had a hand in arranging this event. The Earley Community Choir were a great supporting act who sang really well, making a lovely sound. A very musical group who added that extra dimension to our concert. I was glad they took up the challenge of singing with us despite us all having no opportunity to rehearse together. They obviously enjoyed the experience and the occasion and I would be quite happy to join with them once again at a future date. I hope the FAITH charity benefitted significantly from the whole event. The charity does excellent work – a very worthwhile cause.

These past weeks have been dominated by preparations for next month's Gala Concert which, I am pleased to say is now largely under control. Through Martin's efforts we have been able to secure the Hill Primary School Choir of up to 44 children – although some may not be able to attend if parental permission is not granted. Their participation is the last piece of the complicated jigsaw which includes all three 'Young Singers Competition'

winner, another wonderful young violinist, the children, and of course, us! This will provide a very fitting end to another great season.

We have been fortunate to have many good young singers enter our competition, both last year and this. I would like to engage some of them as our soloists in concerts, giving them yet another opportunity to perform with us and indeed as soloists. They are all worthy of our support and have considerable talents to offer!

Events have made me revise our repertoire as time has passed. In order to speed the learning process, I have revisited some music from years past. This has meant that we have been able to vary our concert repertoire with fresh items. Getting the balance between 'new' and 'used' material is tricky. Any new piece we buy will cost us in excess of £300 and we have over 270 arrangements currently sitting in our music library. This said, it is time for me to go searching for new items that the Choir will enjoy – to keep things fresh and offer new challenges. We do have one or two new items ready to learn, and this I shall be doing in the weeks ahead.

Clive

CW raised the view that we encourage Young Singers and other groups of local musicians who we never see again. He is suggesting that we should be able to tap into them in the future.

CW also raised the issue of what music we sing. He sometimes receives complaints that we resurrect old music, which long standing choristers have sung many years before. However, the cost of using new music is £300 per song, and we need to bear in mind that this quickly impacts the Budget.

CW enquired whether we should once again support the Oddfellows event which only raises around £50. RL stated that this was a worthwhile cause, but we should be wary of attending ad-hoc functions in the name of the Choir, without a proper structure .

08/24 Secretary's report:

RL enquired whether there was need for a separate Secretary's report. SR requested that we retain this item and reported on the following two matters:

Former Chorister Chris King sends his regards to all members of the Choir
The Committee should be aware of the huge number of SPAM items he receives each day.

9/24 Concert Secretary's Report

Young Singers Gala Concert - 6th July

We are now putting together plans for this concert.

Along with our 3 winners, we also have a violinist from Abbey School - Seohyeon Baek
Unfortunately Abbey School choir are not available this year, but we have managed to secure The Hill School choir who were Junior winners of Lets Sing Reading 2024 and in talking I have found out their music teacher is part of Chiltern Choral Society and was part of of the Gwyn Arch event at the Concert Hall a couple of years ago, so this fits in really well with our Young Singers Concert.

We will be putting together the poster for all of us to promote and tickets on sale through ticketsource, currently 25 tickets sold on ticketsource (22 adults 3 children)

2024 /2025 Season

12th October 2024

All Saints Wokingham for Kaleidoscope Charity with A440 Choir

2nd November 2024

Falkland Islands Chapel for RNLI (200th Anniversary) with The Senior Songsters

12th November 2024

Oddfellows Reading Informal concert

10th December 2024

Pangbourne WI - Informal concert

12th December 2024

Christmas Dinner @ Sonning Golf Club (no costs/menu yet)

21st December 2024

Reading Minster Christmas for Music Outreach project with Occasions Singers

8th February 2025

Christchurch Woodley for Parkinsons support act TBC

1st March 2025

St Mary's Church, Purley on Thames for church Support act TBC

5th April 2025

Either a concert in aid of RMVC or

Venue Oxfordshire TBC Charity Parkinsons Oxford TBC support TBC

Trip to Cornwall Thursday 24th April – Sunday 27th April

25th April 2025

Truro Methodist Church with Truro Male Voice Choir

26th April 2025

St Andrew's Church with Mevagissey Male voice choir

Friday 16th May 2025

Venue TBC for Royal Berks Charity support act The Barberettes

28th June 2025

Venue Taplow TBC? and charity Thames Hospice TBC? with Downley Descants Choir

I will also be looking for some dates where we can sing in either or both Woodley Precinct and or Broad Street Mall during next season, most likely would be on a Saturday morning/lunchtime - TBC

2024 /2025 Season

27th September 2025 Venue TBC Mevagissey will be in Reading for Concert with RMVC

Other interest is starting to come in for this season already but some saying too early to make decision.

Trip to Mevagissey 24th - 27th April 2025

I am starting to put together the next trip which is to Mevagissey in 2025.

I have the quote for the coach from Stewarts already and as you can already see the date set and 2 concerts lined up.

Mevagissey choir is the Choir that Artur is in and and Ray Emins is in Truro choir that many of you know.

I am going to Cornwall at the end of June beginning of July and will be seeing Mevagissey Male Voice Choir in concert and meeting up with them, and also meeting with the new concert secretary for Truro Male Voice Choir,

The main thing I now need to complete is finding a suitable Hotel, so hopefully after my visit I will have more of an idea what is in suitable driving distance of the 2 concerts.

Also have in mind some suitable things already to do when visiting.

More details to follow hopefully before end of term.

10/24 Social Media/website report

Nothing further to report.

11/24 Health and safety update

Choir Accidents and First Aid Incidents:

- There was one first aid incident on the trip to Llandrindod Wells – During a joint choir singing session in the Hotel Bar (Thurs 25 April 2024), one member of the choir felt faint and fell against a door and then to the floor. Allan Crisp attended along with the Hotel First Aider. The choir member recovered and was OK thereafter.
- No further accidents or incidents reported.

Potential Incidents:

- During the concert in Llandrindod Wells on Saturday Night (27 April), the process of getting on and off stage was fairly disorderly. Men were moving transversely across the staging and stepping down in several different places at the same time. They were not adjacent to the designated guides and therefore, if they had slipped or stumbled, could not have been assisted.
- We were sat in rows for the initial entrance, which required T1 to be on stage first and then followed by the other 3 sections from the other direction. However we did not then adjust our seating arrangements and instead of all parts on the lowest level leading off first, followed by the next level, we left stage in the wrong order and men were climbing down in sections rather than rows. Consequently we were all jumbled up for the next entry.
- The potential for a serious accident was ever present. I would like to suggest that we need to train up more guides/assisters. We must insist on people climbing and leaving the stage in a safe manner via the guides/assisters. We need to get this right.
- On a good note, we did make sure that there were chairs available at the back of the stage, for those who needed to rest.

Christopher Peck (Health & Safety Officer)

CP emphasised that we need to be hot on safety issues in respect of getting on and off stage at concerts. He emphasised that the varied entrances can sometimes cause confusion amongst the choristers.

12/24 Annual General Meeting

- a) To consider nominations (list attached)**
- b) To approve draft agenda**
- c) To consider those eligible for Long Service Awards**

There remains a vacancy for the T1 section Leader. Also a replacement for Stephen Dale (Tim Small has been suggested).

There is no longer a need for an Assistant Publicity Officer.

Also the requirement for someone to take on the concert template from SR.

Chris Carr has been suggested for the role of Webmaster.

**ACTION: RL to speak to CC.
AE to liaise in respect of Admin.**

Proposers and Seconders

It is the role of Section Leaders to find someone from their own section.

RL emphasised that reports must be received by 28th June at the latest.

Motions are to be forwarded in writing.

Long Service Awards

50 years	Alan Broodbank
40 years	Nil
30 Years	Alan Crisp/Geoff Gale
20 years	Roy Mantel
10 Years	Colin Hinks

**ACTION: JK to check Jim Grufferty
for 20 years, and any 10 year
choristers**

13/24 Proposed meeting dates for 2024/5

5 September, 5 December, 20 March, 19 June, AGM 4 July

ACTION: SR to circulate dates