

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 11 September 2025

Present:

Members: John Kay, (JK), Chairman; John Carr (JC) Deputy Chairman; Mike Jearey (MJ) Treasurer; Steve Richardson (SR) (Secretary); Martin Butler (MB) Concert Secretary; Section Leaders (SLs): Steve Andrewes (SA), Andrew Evans (AE)

Officers: Christopher Peck (CP) Health & Safety Officer, Jon Saverton (JS) (Social Secretary), Nigel Shaw (NS) (Stage Manager)

Minutes: John Painter

Musical Director Clive Waterman (CW)

1) Apologies

Bob Hill (Section Leader 1st Tenors), Paul Moir (Section Leader Basses)

2) Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025 were agreed by the Committee.

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Minute 03/25 – Concert Strategy

No action yet by JC

Minute 12/25 – First Aid

CP had checked first-aider list, 9 out of 10 to continue. Refresher training planned for December.

4) Chairman's Report

JK submitted a report covering the following matters:

Concert Programme

The first concert was coming soon, on 27 September (hosting Mevagissey MVC) and SLs were urged to encourage their Sections to get on top of the Choir's eight songs.

Young Singers' Competition (see below)

Recruitment and Retention

A recruitment evening was being held at rehearsal on 12 September.

The Musical Advisory Team (MAT) was putting effort into refreshing the repertoire to stimulate enthusiasm and interest of choristers and audiences.

Growing Profile and Community Recognition

The Choir had won two recent awards. The Champions of Reading logo was now on website. Cannot announce Best Community Choir in South-East until end October.

5) Young Singers' Competition 2026

Further to Minute 05/25 of the meeting on 19 June 2025, JK reported on the third Young Singers' Competition, under the continuing leadership of past-Chairman Ryland Lee (RL). Promotional fliers for the competition had been launched, and the event promoted on the website, with the following timetable:

- 29 September 2025 - launch
- 31 January 2026 – closing date for applications
- 28 March – auditions
- 27 June – concert

Funding of £1,890 had been successfully secured from the Earley Charity: this did not cover the costs of the adjudicator (C. £400). RL was pursuing further funding from the Blue Spark Foundation (£2,600); and Reading Borough's small grants programme (£700), from whom he had had a positive initial response. Past sponsors were also being approached. The Treasurer (MJ) advised that he expected the costs of the event to be in the order of £2,000 to £2,500, and he had ring-fenced £2,500 in the 2025-26 budget.

JK noted that the Abbey School, the venue for the 2022 and 2023 Competitions, had increased their total venue hire cost, for auditions and concert, by 125%, from £690 to £1,550; and asked the Committee to consider whether to go ahead with these increased fees or to seek an alternative venue. Three options were suggested:

- Status quo (Abbey School) with increased costs
- Hold auditions at Abbey School, and look for an alternative, cheaper, venue for the concert
- Find a different venue for both auditions and concert of comparable standard.

In the last respect, the Berkshire Maestros base at Prospect School, Reading, was identified for the auditions, along with the school itself for the concert. Provisional discussions were taking place with the Maestros. A provisional booking for both the auditions and concert had been made with Abbey School, attracting a discount for the concert booking, but needed to be confirmed by the end of September.

This matter generated a lengthy discussion, in which the following points were made:

- Abbey School was a known, workable and safe venue for the 2026 concert
- The dates for the auditions and concert had been given in the launch material
- The increase in charges was likely the result of VAT on school fees, and may be reflected in the charges of other (non-state) schools locally
- There was the possibility of generous grant funding if all applications were successful; and whatever grant-aid that was attracted would have to be spent
- Had the event to be run in Reading? And how might this affect the grant funding?
- The concert had included a contribution from local school choirs (in 2022 from Abbey School, in 2023 from The Hill Primary School in Caversham); the Berkshire Maestros had extensive contacts and a change of venue should not pose a problem.

AGREED:

- 1) Hold both the 2026 auditions and concert at the Abbey School, at the discounted rate offered (£1,550), and MB to confirm with the school at the end of September;**

2) JK and MB to contact Berkshire Maestros to explore options for 2028 and future years, including the use of Prospect School hall for future concerts.

ACTION: JK / MB

6) Section Leaders' Reports

Brief written reports were received from BH (T1) and SA (T2). SA noted that their new recruit, Alan Gates, was making good progress with learning the repertoire.

7) Treasurer's Report

MJ submitted a report setting out current balances, income and expenditure 2025/6, and Updates since the July AGM. He appended the budget report comparing expenditure and income to date (31 August) with the agreed 2025/26 estimates.

At 31 August 2025, the choir had a balance on its current Metro Bank account of £6,924, compared with £6,613 at 31 May; and a balance on its Reserve Account of £17,965 (compared with £17,927 at 31 May). Including assets and cash / cheques, the choir had total balances at 31 August of £25,652, compared with £24,576 at 31 May, and a projected outturn of £24,317 at 31 May 2026, which was above the long-term target of £18,900. These figures included the £2,500 'protected funds' for the 2026 Young Singers' Competition, as agreed by the Committee.

With regard to income and expenditure on the 2025/26 budget:

- 60% of expected members' subscriptions for 2025/26 had already been received
- The approved budget included a £700 withdrawal from Reserves to help fund the Young Singers' Competition
- The end-of-year forecast included the grant-aid of £1,890 from the Earley Charity (now received); and an increased payment of £1,200 to the Deputy Musical Director approved by the Trustees
- There had been one resignation from membership of the Choir (Frank Neale).

In answer to a question, MJ confirmed that the choir's admissions form invited choristers to make a gift-aid declaration on their subscription to the choir.

It was noted that, following the AGM, Arnie Howell was no longer a Trustee and should be replaced by SA. **ACTION: MJ**

8) Secretary's Report

SR submitted a report inviting the Committee to undertake the annual review of the Choir documents listed below for approval or amendment at the Committee for the year 2025/26.

JK reported that he would be asking Chris Carr (CC) to review and refresh the data held by the Choir on all of its members, in conjunction with Section Leaders, to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Choir documents listed below be endorsed for the choir year 2025/26:

- **Borrowing Equipment from Reading Male Voice Choir**
- **Catering advice for charity and community groups providing food**
- **Choir Officer Handbook**
- **Constitution**
- **Equality and Diversity Policy**
- **Health and Safety Policy**
- **Informal Singing Requests**
- **Member Handbook**
- **MEMBERSHIP FORM AND GIFT AID DECLARATION**
- **Data and Data Protection**
- **Privacy Statement**
- **Safeguarding Policy**
- **Section Leader Handbook**
- **Trustee Handbook**
- **Welcome letter**

2) That JK speak to CC about reviewing and refreshing the data held by the Choir on all of its members, and that SLs actively cooperate with CC in this important exercise.

ACTION: JK

9) **Concert Secretary's Report**

MB submitted a report setting out the Choir's projected concert and singing programme for 2025/26 and into 2026/27. The schedule identified eight full concerts for the Choir in 2025/26, alongside two more informal singing events and the rehearsal day for the Young Singers' Competition. The report also made three suggestions for a possible overseas trip in 2027, and MB raised one more.

The first concert of the year will be on Saturday 27 September, at St Edmund Campion Church, Maidenhead, where RMVC would be hosting the Megavissey Male Choir. JC was lead organiser for this, and at his request the meeting discussed the detailed arrangements for the evening, including pre-rehearsals and the afterglow.

The four options for overseas trips in 2027 were as follows:

- Drumagabee, Co. Down (guests of the local MVC)
- Dusseldorf – celebration of the 80th anniversary of the 1947 town-twinning with Reading
- Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival, Italy (Sudtirol)
- France – near Grenoble (link offered by Denis Bredelet)

With regard to Dusseldorf, it was noted that Cllr David Stevens, the father of Elle Stevens (who had sung with the choir) was the Chairman of the Reading:Dusseldorf Link. In general terms this trip was favoured, whilst recognising that no formal approach had been made.

10) **Musical Director's Report**

CW submitted a report referring to the Choir's busy autumn schedule leading up to Christmas, and raising the following matters, which were discussed by the Committee:

- Salvation Army Concert – 6 December.

The Committee **AGREED** with CW's suggestion that he buy new material for the Christmas repertoire

ACTION: CW

- Minster Joint Concert – 20 December.

The Committee **AGREED to continuing to sing from the choir stalls.**

ACTION: CW

- One-off Casual Christmas Requests

These had been received this year from the Oddfellows, and from Colin Hinks to sing at the Caversham care home where his wife Myrie is now a permanent resident. The Choir had sung for the Oddfellows in 2024. The Choir would also be singing for the Reading Macular Degeneration Group in February 2026.

The Committee reiterated its long-standing position that it should not sing for casual groups two years' running; and **AGREED to say no in 2025 to the Oddfellows, and to accept an invitation to sing at the Caversham care home.**

ACTION: MB

11) Social Media and Website

The Committee appreciated the new recruitment poster, and noted that JK had recently appeared on Radio Berkshire, and that a recruitment video featuring SR was now on Facebook.

The Committee noted the regular use made of Facebook by a number of members.

AE reported that the Instagram account was running, and needed regular input.

12) Health & Safety

CP reported that an inspection of equipment would be taking place on Saturday 13 September.

SW would be PAT-testing the electronic equipment in the lock-up, and separately that held by CW at home.

CP would be reminding the choir about the fire drill arrangements at Hawkedon School at the next rehearsal.

CP would be organising first-aid refresher courses nearer to Christmas (see also Minute above)

MB raised the issue of getting off stage at concerts, and men not proceeding to the end of their row to descend using the handrails.

ACTION: MB and NS to stress the safe procedure to exit the stage at concert rehearsals.

13) Choir Presence on Stage

JK expanded on a point raised by NS, concerning the choir's appearance and behaviour at concerts, which sometimes demonstrated a decline in discipline. The choir was performing at concerts at all times when in uniform, including sitting in the auditorium listening to other acts, and walking on and off stage. In the ensuing discussion, particular mention was made of talking and fidgeting on stage; chatting or looking at iPhones when sitting in the auditorium; sloppiness and cleanliness of uniforms (especially trousers); and chatting at rehearsals while CW was teaching other Sections.

ACTION: JC to raise these issues at the next rehearsal.

14) Social Programme

JS reported that the autumn's theatre trips were now fully booked.

The Christmas Dinner had been booked for Thursday 4 December, at Sonning Golf Club.

The meeting, which started at 7.30pm, ended at 9.13pm.