

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 26 March 2026

Present:

Members: John Kay, (JK), Chairman; John Carr (JC) Deputy Chairman; Mike Jearey (MJ) Treasurer; Steve Richardson (SR) (Secretary); Section Leaders (SLs): B Hill (BH), Steve Andrewes (SA), Andrew Evans (AE), P Moir (PB)

Officers: Martin Butler (MB) Concert Secretary

Minutes: John Painter

Musical Director: Absent

1) Apologies

Christopher Peck Health & Safety Officer), Jon Saverton (Social Secretary), Nigel Shaw, Clive Waterman (Musical Director)

2) Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025 were agreed by the Committee.

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Minute 4 – Concert Planning

The March concert, for Kaleidoscope, at the Whitty Theatre, Wokingham, had not raised the anticipated funds for the charity, due in part to their need to find a new venue at shortish notice.

JC reported that he, MB, JK, SR and AE had met to review concert planning, with a focus on helping charities plan their concerts. Actions arising included:

- Developing lists of suitable charities, in Reading, Wokingham and Maidenhead
- JK to write to charities to promote the choir – draft letter in circulation for comment
- AE to advise on promotional material for use by charities (see also Minute 11 below)

Minute 8 – Secretary’s Report

The Choir had linked itself to the Joy App

Minute 9 – Concert Secretary’s Report

Oxford Concert – 25 April – choir coach hired and paid for – MJ to seek reimbursement from individual choristers after event.

Minute 10 – Health & Safety

SLs confirmed that buddying arrangements were in hand for choristers who needed them.

4) Chairman’s Report

The Committee welcomed back JK after his recent health absence. JK thanked JC for standing in for him, whilst noting the JC had himself had a serious accident. JK also noted that the MD (CW) was recovering from a planned operation and wished him well: in his absence, three rehearsals had been covered by Hayley Tull (Deputy MD) and Victoria Henshall.

Recent Concerts and Activities

JC noted that the Kaleidoscope concert at the Whitty Theatre had gone well, stage layout issues had been addressed and the singing was good. The Choir had put in four good concert performances so far in 2025-26.

Young Singers' Competition

R Lee submitted an update report. The competition had attracted 37 entries, of whom 25 had been invited to audition on 28 March. The arrangements for the auditions were in place and had been notified to the choir.

The three winners would be invited to sing at the gala concert on 27 June. The support act(s) for this concert had still to be settled. The concert clashed with a Berkshire Maestros event, the Abbey school choirs were not available, and Hawkedon school had not yet replied. The meeting discussed other school choir options including Crossfields and St Josephs.

ACTION:

- 1) MB to chase Hawkedon for a response, and to liaise with CW about other possible school choir options**
- 2) SA to contact Crossfields School**

5) Section Leaders' Reports

Brief written reports were received from all four SLs. Updates on the health and position of individual members were given, and related issues discussed. F Neale had returned to the T1s, and there was the prospect of new recruits to B1s. The Committee noted with sadness that Dave Ewens was moving to Devon and that ways to celebrate his long service with the choir were being explored.

6) Treasurer's Report

MJ submitted a report setting out current balances, income and expenditure 2025/6, and the end-of-year forecast. He appended the budget report comparing expenditure and income to 15 March 2026 with the agreed 2025/26 estimates.

At 15 March 2026 the choir had a balance on its current Metro Bank account of £13,773, compared with £6,613 at 31 May 2025; and a balance on its Reserve Account of £18,041, compared with £17,927 at 31 May. Including assets and cash / cheques, the choir had total balances at 15 March of £31,831, compared with £24,576 at 31 May, and a projected outturn of £27,167 at 31 May 2026, which was above both the long-term target of £18,900 and the actual balance at 31 May 2025 of £24,576. These figures included the £2,500 'protected funds' for the Young Singers' Competition, as agreed by the Committee.

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

- Membership subs were as budgeted
- There was a surplus of £411 on social events
- The annual Gift-Aid claim of £1,914 had been received
- The cost of the coach for the Oxford concert would be recovered in full from travelling choristers
- The end-of-year forecast showed an excess of £2,475 on Reserves, including:
 - receipt of grants from the Earley Charity (£1,890) and Reading Council (£2,500) for the Young Singers' competition and the promotion of youth singing more generally;
 - additional allowance for the Deputy MD (£1,200), which would be ongoing, and a forecast additional charge in 2025-26 for stand-in musicians to cover CW's absence (£800);
 - non-core expenditure was forecast to exceed core expenditure.

Since December 2025, one member had resigned, and one new member had paid to join, with one prospective new member and one possible returnee. One member was on leave of sickness absence.

The Committee discussed the Choir's positive financial position, and possible future demands on the reserves.

Financial Reserves and Financial Controls Policies

MJ had previously circulated for comment two draft new Choir procedures:

- RMVC Financial Reserves Policy
- RMVC Financial Controls Policy

AGREED: The Policies to be accepted and recommended to the AGM for formal adoption

ACTION: MJ to let SR have final versions for inclusion on Choir website.

Business Continuity

In the light of recent developments, MJ tabled a paper on the Security and Resilience of the choir's financial and management data, which was currently held by office holders on personal devices and under their own security and retention arrangements, which could give rise to single points of failure in cases of personal incapacity.

AGREED: MJ to set up a small team, including MB, JK, AE and Chris Carr, to:

- **Compile to choir's requirements for a resilient data system and digitalisation policy**
- **Investigate and assess solutions and get firm costs**
- **Report back with costed recommended actions**

ACTION: MJ

7) Musical Director's Report

CW submitted a report *in absentia* commenting on the Choir's activities over the winter term, as follows:

- Repertoire
- Christ Church Woodley concert (Parkinsons) – 7 February
- Jane Arch's funeral, 24 February
- Whitty Theatre (Kaleidoscope) concert, 7 March
- Young Singers' Competition auditions, 28 March
- JK's absence and CW's operation

8) Secretary's Report

SR raised the following two matters:

Charity Excellence – Free AI Training

Charity Excellence, in association with Microsoft, was offering free courses to understand and use AI to charity members.

ACTION: SR to circulate details of the courses to Committee members.

Long Service Awards 2026/27

ACTION: MJ to let SR know which choristers would qualify for the next year's awards.

9) Concert Secretary's Report

MB submitted a report updating the Choir's concert and singing programme for 2025/26 and into 2026/27, including the sums of money raised for charity at the first five concerts held (totalling £9,864). He drew particular attention to the following future concerts:

- 25 April 2026 – Parkinson's Concert in Summertown, Oxford –
 - Elle Stevens to be guest act – but having difficulty contacting her.
 - Coach booked for choir use. Savacentre pick-up no longer possible.
- 16 May – Big Sing for Newbury – 4 choirs – warm up together
- 6 June 2026 – Concert at Sindlesham Court – solo singer required
- 27 June 2026 – Gala Concert for Young Singers – no children's choir identified
- 3 October 2026 – joint concert with Built VC, All Saints Downshire Square, for the Headway charity, with an Afterglow held in the church hall.
- 7 November – Concert at Trinity Church, Lower Earley
- 6 March 2027 – Concert at St Mary's Purley

Overseas Tour 2027

MB circulated (separately) details of the 30th Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival, Italy (Sudtiro), to be held between 16-20 June 2027. The Committee responded positively to this suggestion, for which expressions of interest had to be submitted by 1 April 2026.

AGREED: Support taking part in principle, subject to checking with CW and establishing level and balance of interest in the choir.

ACTION: JK / MB to seek initial indication of interest at choir rehearsal on 27 March.

Assistance

MB updated the committee on his family medical situation, and how this would impact on his time and ability to commit to choir work. He requested assistance with organising future concerts, and he and the committee identified two possible men whom he could approach.

ACTION: MB to approach men to help organise future concerts.

10) Health & Safety

CP reported in absentia that there had been no first aid incidents since the last committee. First aid training had been completed by AE and JP, and was being organised for three more first aiders.

11) Social Media and Website

AE tabled a note on RMVC social media and publicity. Facebook was the main medium at present, and over the past 60 days the RMVC facebook page had had 6,371 views, a 20% increase on the previous period, with over 1,000 views triggered by the posted video of the choir singing *Fix You* at its March concert. Instagram was also being used to target young people, with recent focus on the Young Singers' competition.

The website was now looked after by Chris Carr. It had a direct link to Ticketsource for the sake of concert tickets.

The note also commented on *The Voice*, the Choir leaflet (programme cover), and the production of fliers and tickets for all concerts.

12) Choir Presence on Stage

MB provided feedback on the March concert, where he was in the audience. Some shoes were not polished, trousers were of varying shades of grey, hands were not always by the side when singing. This led to a discussion about the choir uniform.

ACTION: SLs to keep an eye on appearance at future concerts.

13) Dates of Future Meetings

Thursday 18 June 2026, with AGM on Friday 3 July 2026.

The meeting, which started at 7.30pm, ended at 9.12pm.