

Reading Male Voice Choir

Minutes of a committee meeting held at Hawkedon School on 16 June 2026

Present:

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

Officers: Martin Butler (MB) Concert Secretary, Christopher Peck (CP) Health & Safety Officer

Musical Director: Clive Waterman (CW)

Minutes: John Painter

1) Apologies

Bob Hill (SL – T1), Jon Saverton (Social Secretary), Nigel Shaw (Concert Coordinator)

2) Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026 were agreed by the Committee.

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes:

Minute 4 – Concert Planning

JC reported that a further meeting to review concert planning would be held the next week, to focus on helping charities plan their concerts. Lists of suitable charities, in Reading, Wokingham and Maidenhead, had been compiled and letter agreed for JK to send to charities to promote the choir. AE had identified the social media outlets used by the choir. The key objective to optimise audience size.

Next steps:

- Evaluate charities for potential impact, and effort required to support their charity concert
- Review charity responses to JKs letter in the autumn

Minute 8 – Secretary's Report

Long Service Awards – need to identify for 2026-27.

ACTION: MJ to pass list to JK / SR

4) Chairman's Report

Recent Concerts and Activities

Successful concerts held in Oxford and Sindlesham, participation in Newbury Spring Festival, and the 3rd Gwyn Arch Young Singers' competition. Rehearsals well attended, and repertoire expanding. JK emphasised the importance of personal practice at home to enable rehearsals to focus on musical interpretation and presentation rather than note-bashing. The Spring Music Advisory Committee had not met, the next meeting would be in September.

ACTION: JK and CW to review feedback on music and repertoire over the summer.

Young Singers' Competition

The competition had attracted 37 entries, with 25 invited to audition on 28 March. Four winners identified this year (2 in junior section). All four to sing with choir in free Gala Concert on 27 June, at Abbey School. The detailed arrangements for the concert, including the production of the programme (300 8-pages @ £200), promoting the event, support acts, welcoming guests, videoing, and official photography, were discussed.

Funding Coach Travel to Concerts and Events

Arising from the Oxford concert, JK noted a mismatch between the Members' Handbook (S2.2) and the Financial Costs Policy (S7, S14) concerning individual costs of travel to choir concerts and on tours when coaches were provided by the choir. In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- Travel on choir tours was self-funding
- Coach travel for concerts had been provided when the event was a distance from Reading (30 miles was commented): this had happened very rarely in recent years (the last times being Bournemouth and Huntingdon in 2013 / 2014)
- The Members' Handbook wording reflected a time, dating back to G Arch, when choristers were expected to attend concerts and when coach travel was provided to assist this they made a part-payment, with some subsidy from choir funds: this requirement to attend concerts was no longer strictly the case
- The issue with the Oxford trip arose from MJ giving an indication of cost, based on numbers saying they would travel, before the event but not seeking payment until after the event, when the cost profile had changed as fewer choristers had travelled in the coach

AGREED:

- 1) The cost of coach travel to concerts to be self-funding, with the Treasurer setting a fixed price and getting payment in advance with no refund, and no supplementary requests for payment**
- 2) MJ to suggest a modification of wording for S2.2 of the Members' Handbook**

ACTION: MJ, SR

JK reflected on a successful musical year, with a good series of concerts, and thanked the Committee and wider membership for their continuing support.

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. There had been 2 new recruits to B1s.

6) Treasurer's Report

MJ submitted a report setting out current balances, income and expenditure for 2025/6, and the end-of-year outturn. He appended the budget report comparing expenditure and income to 31 May 2026 with the agreed 2025/26 estimates.

At 31 May 2026 the choir had a balance on its current Metro Bank account of £8,119, compared with £6,613 at 31 May 2025; and a balance on its Reserve Account of £18,080, compared with £17,927 at 31 May 2025. Including assets and cash / cheques, the choir had total balances at 31 May of £26,286, compared with £24,576 at 31 May 2025. MJ projected an outturn of £25,160 at 31 May 2027, which was above both the long-term target of £17,500 but below the final balance at 31 May 2026 of £26,286. 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:

- Income over the year was £25,296.
- There were 61 paying members and 1 honorary member at year end, raising £9,069

- There was a surplus of £1,709 of income over expenditure which would be carried forward to 2026-27 to help support the 2028 Young Singers' Competition
- Core expenditure had exceeded core income by £2,708.
- The choir had received additional one-off grant income of £4,390, in respect of the Young Singers' Competition, without this there would have been a negative cashflow of £2,681 which was £2,008 more than budgeted
- The MD costs were £1,721 above budget due to an additional allowance of £1,200 paid to the DMD, which was ongoing; and the £521 costs of stand-in conductors and accompanists during the year

The proposed 2026-27 budget was based on the following assumptions:

- Reduce reserves by £1,195 at 31 May 2027
- Maintain similar programme of concerts and keep concert fee at £400
- Membership to remain steady at c. 62 men
- Young Singers' Competition 2026 to have no income from sale of tickets and to incur costs of £1,993, with a contribution of £1,709 c/f from 2025-26
- Continue to receive Reading Community Lottery funding at same rate
- DMD base honorarium to be increased by £1,200 pa, and increase both the MD and DMD honoraria by 4%
- Balance costs of social events and tours by contributions from participating members

The report set out two alternative budget options, as follows:

- Same income and costs: increase subscriptions by 11% to cover gap between core expenditure and income
- Same income and costs: no increase in subscription rates, keep at 2025-26 level

The report identified three key risks in setting the budget:

- Net loss of members' subscriptions (5 pa)
- Performing fewer income-generating concerts (3)
- Increase in MD costs (20%)

In summary, the report proposed sustaining the choir's financial stability for 2026-26 by:

- Increasing membership subscriptions by 4%, to £159
- Increasing the DMDs honorarium by £1,200, and then making a cost-of living increase of 4% to the MDs and DMDs honoraria
- Continuing the level of choir activities and the £400 concert fee
- Keeping expenditure under control while accepting a slight reduction in the concert margin of income
- Carrying over funds from 2025/26 to support the Young Singers' gala concert in 2026-27.

The Committee discussed the report and the budget to be recommended to the AGM. It also noted that MJ would need to submit the choir's annual report to the Charity Commission to the AGM. It noted the ongoing higher level of the choir's reserves, and possible calls on them in future years (change of uniform, speaker bags).

AGREED: That the budget for 2026/27, as summarised above, be recommended by the Treasurer to the AGM on behalf of the Committee

ACTION: MJ

Business Continuity

In the light of MJ's paper on the Security and Resilience of the choir's financial and management data, MP had convened and held a zoom meeting of a small group of members to review the choir's requirements for a resilient data system and digitalisation policy, and would be reporting back with costed recommended actions in the autumn.

ACTION: MJ

7) Musical Director's Report

CW submitted a report on the choir's activities over the spring term, as follows:

- Young Singers' Competition - auditions, 28 March and Gala Concert, 28 June
- Parkinson's Concert, St Andrew's Oxford, 25 April
- Newbury Festival, St John the Evangelist, 16 May
- Sindlesham Court Concert, 6 June
- His own absence and concert cover

CW reflected on the choir's repertoire and gave notice of a new piece of music for the autumn – *Watching the Wheat*.

8) Secretary's Report

SR submitted a report proposing dates for the choir's rehearsals and committee meetings in 2026-27, and dates for the Supporters' Group meetings. In recognition of the early date of Easter 2027 (26-28 March), the last rehearsal of winter term will be on 19 March, starting again for summer term on 9 April.

9) Concert Secretary's Report

MB submitted a report reviewing the choir's concert and singing programme for 2025/26, in which 9 concerts and events were held, raising £11,164 for charity; and setting out the programme for 2026-26, with six concerts booked to date, and three more under discussion.

Overseas Trip 2027

The report also explored two options for an overseas trip in May / June 2027, as follows:

- the 30th Alta Pusteria International Choir Festival, Italy and Austria (Sudtiro) – 16-20 June
- Cracovia Cantans 2027, Poland (Crakow) – 10-13 June

The Italy trip was proving expensive, around £1200 - £1400 pp, and may involve split hotels. The Polish trip was cheaper, c. £750 pp. The Committee discussed the practicality of either trip, given that both were during school term time and therefore the DMD would not be able to accompany the choir.

AGREED: Not to pursue overseas trip idea for 2027

Deputy Concert Secretary

MB reported that, in the light of his family medical situation and job commitments, he had approached men to support him in the Concert Secretary role, and three men had volunteered. The new post of Deputy Concert secretary would be filled at the AGM.

Trustee

Following the separation of the Secretary and Concert Secretary roles, in 2023, the former had been a Trustee but the latter had not. Given the key role of the Concert Secretary for the choir, SR proposed that

the constitution be amended to make the Concert Secretary an additional Trustee. **The Committee AGREED.**

ACTION: SR to take proposal to amend the constitution to the AGM.

10) Health & Safety

CP reported that a step for the MDs podium had been procured, and he was now looking to source a handrail. First aid training had been completed by a further two choristers, with 8 now trained.

11) Social Media and Website

AE reported on choir social media and publicity. A recent RMVC video posted on Facebook had attracted over 12,000 views (1,500 a day), supported by the choir paying £12 for a 3-day boost. The choir was also active on Instagram, and Tiktok (MB).

12) AGM – Friday 3 July 2026

The Committee reviewed the draft agenda for the AGM , and the list of nominations for election as Trustees and Officers. All Committee members were asked to indicate their willingness to continue to serve.

13) Dates of Meetings 2026-27

Thursday 17 September, 10 December 2026, 25 March and 17 June 2027, with AGM on Friday 2 July 2027.

The meeting, which started at 7.30pm, ended at 9.45pm.