



**Southend Boys' Choir and Southend Girls' Choir**  
**Trust Report of the Trustees for the year ending 31**  
**August 2021**

Registered Charity Number: 1161752

Principal address: Rosemary Pennington – PO Box 6, Civic Centre,  
Victoria Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex SS2  
6ER

Email: [info@southendchoirs.org.uk](mailto:info@southendchoirs.org.uk)

Website: [www.southendchoirs.org.uk](http://www.southendchoirs.org.uk)

Trustees: Emma Lindsey (Chair) Peter  
Croysdill Christine Wallen (Treasurer)  
Robert Little  
Alan Thorpe (Secretary) Jackie  
Mullan  
Christopher Walker

Bankers: CAF Bank, 25 Kings Hill  
Avenue, Kings Hill, West  
Malling ME19 4JQ

**What the charity does**

Southend Boys' and Girls' Choirs are amongst the leading youth choirs in the country, each choir rehearsing and performing in its own right as well as in joint performances.

The formal objectives of the CIO are to:

- a) promote, improve, develop and maintain public appreciation and education of choral music and related activities in all aspects by the presentation, of public concerts, recitals, broadcasts, recordings or at the invitation of promoters and other artistic bodies; and
- b) educate and enhance the skills and enjoyment of all members of the choirs through a range of performances and musical opportunities, in the UK and abroad.

The Choirs recruit from all schools in the borough and beyond. There are no joining or subscription fees for choir membership, so the Choirs draw on a very wide range of backgrounds, as well as a big age range - singers may enter our main choirs at 8, but our younger groups Little Singers and Step-Up Choir provide an early introduction to the enjoyment of singing from as young as age 3. Members may stay until university and beyond via our offshoot choirs - the Southend Young Men's Chorus for male voices and the Chorus Sirenum for female voices. We work hard to promote a friendly, inclusive and welcoming culture for members to feel accepted, safe and happy. Additionally, there is no entry requirement to read music or to have had any previous music training. Consequently, the Choirs are open to everyone and our membership is diverse.

**Public benefits**

The trustees consider the CIO's activities benefit the public through the provision of high quality, creative musical concerts and opportunities for young people, irrespective of their families' means, to develop their musical skills and interests positively and to give regular performances for public enjoyment.

## **Activities during the year**

For the whole year, restrictions have prevented in-person rehearsals, but our Artistic Directors have worked very hard to ensure choir participation could continue online, with both rehearsals and online recordings. One of the first recordings made was of Brian Tate's song "We are One", which raised over £1700 for the NHS. Our most recent virtual choir recording "How Can I Keep from Singing" also incorporated instrumentalists from the town. The song was arranged by local musician, Mike Stephens, for children's voices, adult voices and full symphony orchestra. We sent an open invitation to musicians to take part in this virtual song for Southend and in addition raised funds for some of our most vulnerable communities in the town. The song is available along with the Choirs' other recordings on our website.

We were privileged that some of our younger singers were chosen to take part in a project with Britten Pears Arts, joining with other youth choirs across the UK to record a new song for their Friday Afternoons project, a resource for schools and choirs across the UK.

Although the planned tour to America was sadly cancelled, we did take the opportunity to join with our friends in the USA virtually in a recording called "Phoenix".

At Christmas we were able to bring small groups of singers together to share some Christmas music, recording the music for use at a London carol service as well as actually performing a short and socially distanced local carol service. Although everyone was singing with masks, this was still a very special event for us all. Over the summer, the Choirs gave two well supported outdoor concerts locally to raise funds for the Mayor's Charity.

During the year, we introduced an annual bursary scheme, in association with the English Speaking Union, to support local young musicians who are continuing their musical studies at a recognised institution of higher education.

## **Financial Review**

Each quarter the Trustees receive and consider a detailed statement of the CIO's current financial position. During the current year, the adequacy of reserves has been regularly monitored.

Although the level of available reserves has dropped to some extent, this reflects the absence of normal income generated by choir activities, and the Trustees consider the financial position remains satisfactory in the circumstances. The critical time will be as and when full activities (and associated expenses) resume, but in this respect a number of mitigating factors during the year have put the CIO in a better position to face that challenge:

- despite the cessation of annual grant income from the local authority, as mentioned in last year's report, we are very grateful to Southend Borough Council for making a one-off grant to the CIO, in the light of Covid disruption, equal to half of our former annual amount and receivable in 2021/22
- early during the crisis, our Artistic Directors declined to receive normal fees for musical services and have very generously agreed to continue this for an extended period going on to March 2022. Given that they have continued throughout to work tirelessly to allow choir membership

opportunity to sing wherever possible, and to prepare for a wider 'restart', this reflects their exceptional commitment to the Choirs.

- a successful bid was made for significant Arts Council England funding sufficient to cover commissioning and other costs relating to our major restart project - see details below. If needed for other future one-off events, the CIO anticipates also being able to access support via the Essex Community Fund.

Trustees are actively looking at ways to enhance the CIO's fundraising efforts but remain firmly committed to there being no subscription or other charge for choir membership.

### **The future - planning for 'Re-start'**

On the musical side:

- we have an exciting project funded by Arts Council England, which includes the commissioning of a new choral work by composer Kerry Andrew on the theme "Together". This will involve extensive community participation through workshops at local primary schools and with Afghan children who are currently residing in a bridging hotel in Southend. In total there will be 16 workshops reaching around 465 young people. The creative material from these workshops will be incorporated into a choral work by the composer and will be performed in early 2022.
- An exciting programme for the Christmas season is planned, including concerts at London's Barbican and the Royal Festival Hall, in addition to our usual carol singing bookings at London's Claridge's hotel. We are also promoting our own Christmas concert at the church of St Bartholomew the Great in London.
- Planning is also in progress for in-person weekly sessions to start up again during the Autumn term, for our youngest singers in our groups Little Singers and Step-Up Choir.

On the organisational side, strengthening the Trustee Board has allowed nominated individual Trustees to focus on specific areas as identified by strategic review:

- Volunteer recruitment & support.
- Media profile and online communication, especially focusing on how best to connect with supporters and with prospective choir members.
- Diversity & Inclusion, in particular aiming to draw choir membership from an even broader range of local schools.
- Fundraising, including development of a 'Supporter Group' and exploring opportunities for contact with local businesses.

### **Volunteers**

Our volunteers are definitely 'key workers' for the Choirs' operation, whether they undertake direct roles at choir activities or get involved behind the scenes in areas such as fundraising or publicity. They are DBS checked to ensure safeguarding is at the centre of choir work, with the choirs' specific policies on safeguarding and child protection regularly reviewed to reflect current guidance and any government policy changes. All volunteers and helpers undertake specific safeguarding training - some volunteers are also Southend Council registered chaperones, ensuring a high degree of regard for the welfare of the choristers when they are with the choirs.

We now have a Trustee whose dedicated role is to build our volunteer team, to ensure their valuable support both matches the needs of the Choirs operations and provides the volunteers themselves with an enjoyable and rewarding experience in giving their time.

The Trust are hugely grateful to the team of volunteers that carry out the considerable work needed to run the Choirs and we were honoured that this was additionally recognised when we were nominated for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service during the year.

### **Structure, Governance and Management**

The Southend Boys' and Girls' Choirs registered with the Charity Commission in 2007 and reconstituted in May 2015 as a Charitable Incorporated Association ('CIO'). This is a legal form

enabling a charity to enter into contracts as a corporate body, rather than, with non-corporate status, trustees bearing individual liability for any contracts they enter into on behalf of the charity.

Trustees are expected to show an active interest in the work and benefits of the choirs, and nominees for appointment are given full briefing about these before being considered. In making successor appointments, Trustees have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience offered towards achieving the effective administration of the CIO.

With the exceptional Covid situation and the ongoing Strategic Review initiated last year, Trustees held frequent meetings over the current year (10 in all) , almost all conducted online. Trustees took the decision to temporarily recruit 2 additional Trustees, as permitted by the CIO's Constitution in "exceptional circumstances", increasing the complement to 9 .

It was resolved to review the position again at the 2022 AGM, aiming to return to the normal complement of 7 as and when circumstances allow.

Signed on behalf of Trustees:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsey".

.....  
Chair of Trustees

**16 November 2021**  
Date

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of  
The Southend Boys' Choir and Southend Girls' Choir  
Trust

The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act), and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements to ensure that

- proper accounting records are kept (in accordance with section 41 of the Act); and
- accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act; or

2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed   
Laura Clegg M.A.A.  
Independent Examiner

Date 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022