



Annual Report of the Trustee Executive Committee of Rising Voices Wessex – May 2020

The Trustees of Rising Voices Wessex Community Choirs present its sixth annual report – from May 2019 to May 2020.

Rising Voices Wessex choirs have been established to support people whose lives have been affected by cancer - patients, those bereaved through cancer or carers. Music also has power to communicate with individuals at times of difficulty – music making has benefits for a number of medical conditions. Through singing, the choirs aid recovery of confidence and social interaction as well as promoting the concept of living well with and after cancer.

Rising Voices Wessex was launched on the 8th January 2013 at the Lighthouse Arts Centre, Poole with local media coverage and a brief feature shown on BBC South Today – it became a registered charity in January 2016

Public performances by **Rising Voices Wessex** are a regular feature and are important because

- they demonstrate the benefits of singing to confidence and wellbeing
- they help raise funds that enable the choirs to be sustainable,
- they encourage ongoing member recruitment.

Previous performing highlights included a visit to Cherbourg, Poole's twin town, to feature at a French cancer awareness event early in 2013 and being a supporting choir for Russell Watson at the Lighthouse in Poole during his UK 'Up Close and Personal' tour in June 2015, a supporting choir, for Blake at the Regent Centre in Christchurch in 2016 for their Songs of Stage and Screen tour, and a supporting choir for the Parry 100 Festival 'Glad Day' with Mike Westbrook at St Peters Church, Bournemouth in 2018.

The Poole **Rising Voices Wessex** choir rehearsals continue to take place every Tuesday evening from 6.15 to 8.30 pm at St Johns Church, Ashley Road, Parkstone. Most weeks 35 - 40 singers attend.

The Bournemouth **Rising Voices Wessex** choir meets and rehearses The New Church, Tuckton, Bournemouth every Monday evening from 6.45 to 9.00 pm. Most weeks 35 – 40 singers attend.

Rising Voices Wessex continues to appreciate the support of St John's Church, Parkstone and The New Church, Tuckton in allowing us to use their excellent venues and facilities and welcoming the choirs to their churches.

Social interaction is a key part of the **Rising Voices Wessex** strategy. Social interaction over tea, coffee or a soft drink creates a supportive environment that strengthens with the support provided through the choirs. Members attending choir rehearsals are encouraged to make a donation of £4.00 towards the running costs of the choirs, i.e. the Musical Director, venue costs, song sheets, music and refreshments.

It is important that **Rising Voices Wessex** presents a professional image in performances to highlight its identity. Members pay a small donation for **Rising Voices Wessex** labelled polo shirts and fleeces – generally used in daytime/daylight performances. For evening choir performances members wear black clothing with blue scarves or blue waterfall cardigans for the ladies and black shirts and trousers for gentlemen with blue ties. Each new member receives a set of lyrics covering the choirs' repertoire and folders for lyrics are available to purchase.

During the year numbers attending rehearsals continue to increase with aggregate weekly numbers now totalling 70-90 members (covering both venues) and just under 150 members on its database.

Rising Voices Wessex continues to encourage recruitment of new members. Although **Rising Voices Wessex** has a website and social media presence established through Facebook, Twitter and You Tube it appears that word of mouth, however, is the main route to attracting new members.

Rising Voices Wessex is a member of Arts and Health South West, The National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Living Well Active.

Rising Voices Wessex and our community:

Members of **Rising Voices Wessex choirs** come from the communities in the Bournemouth-Christchurch-Poole (BCP) conurbation. Performances by **Rising Voices Wessex** predominantly take place in the locality and demonstrate the power of singing to build confidence and wellbeing as well as offering the educational message locally of "living well with cancer".

Week by week management and administration of the choirs is undertaken by a Steering Group that consists of the Choir Director, two Trustees and volunteer choir members, capitalizing on the range of skills that members can offer which, in itself, can further help restoration of confidence and wellbeing by contributing their time and expertise to **Rising Voices Wessex**. The Steering Group meets monthly and reports to the board of Trustees.

As a registered charity **Rising Voices Wessex** is managed at a strategic level by a Board of Trustees drawn principally from the community with a range professional backgrounds - clinical, musical and financial – appropriate to the needs of the charity. The Chairman, officers and other Trustees are appointed (and may be re-

appointed) at the Annual General Meeting. The skill mix of Trustees is subject to regular review by the Trustees to ensure an optimum balance of expertise. There is currently one unfilled Trustee vacancy

Rising Voices Wessex is also quite frequently called on to perform at other charity events in the conurbation, especially those associated with cancer, further helping in its mission of promoting singing for health and wellbeing – and living well with or after cancer.

Rising Voices Wessex held a further Big Sing event on 14th July 2019 at the Bournemouth School for Girls. We were delighted that Gavin Carr, Chorus Director of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus led the day supported by Chris Dowie, Accompanist and Assistant Chorus Master of the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus – the ABBA themed day was hugely enjoyed by all.

How *Rising Voices Wessex* makes a difference:

A key part of the **Rising Voices Wessex** strategy is to look at what we are doing and we continue to try and capture the benefits of being part of the choir through an annual survey.

Questionnaire surveys in the last two years continue to indicate that members derive significant benefit from **Rising Voices Wessex**. Full results from the most recent survey can be found on the website. Included in this report are some key findings from the survey. It is also clear from the questionnaires that the personality and approach of the Musical Director are very important to the success of the choirs.

Rising Voices Wessex has also contributed to questionnaire research run by Tenovus Cancer Care into the benefits of music and singing for people affected by cancer

What our members have told us in our annual survey:

“The friends I have met and made are now lifelong friends - you don't find that often in life. It's a special place”.

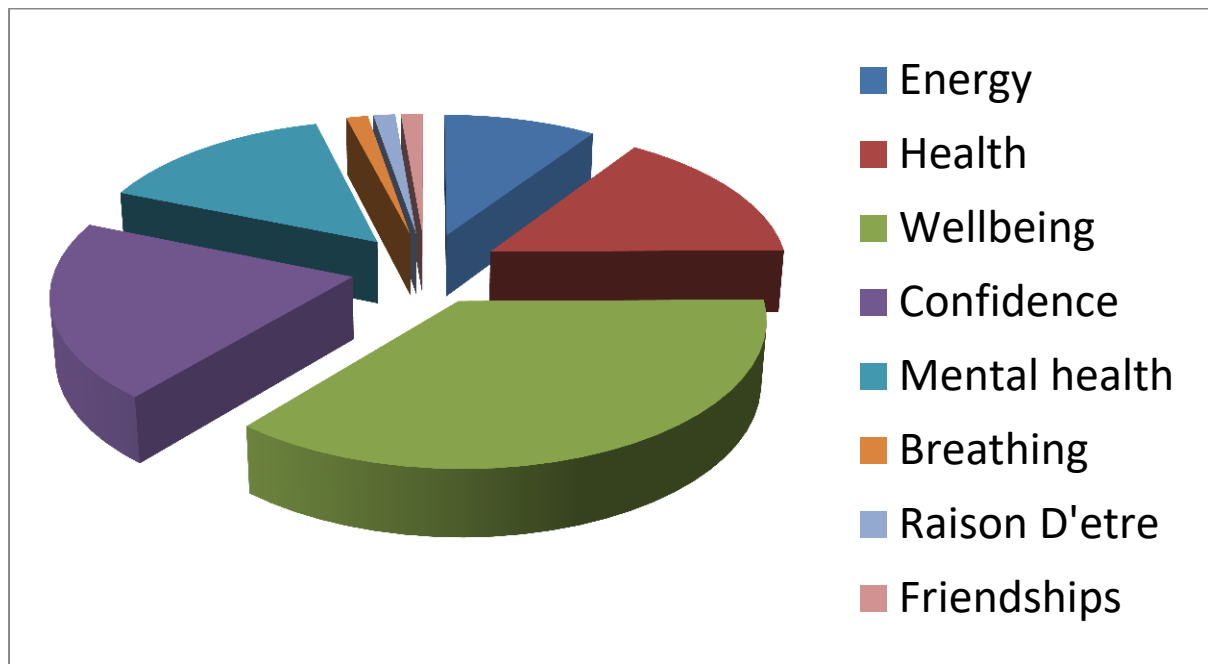
“The unexpected close friendships and support I have gained is important to me, and the fun of singing, when it sounds great”.

“Everybody that attends the choirs is so friendly, welcoming and understanding and obviously enjoy the singing. The choir has become a massive part of my life I love and enjoy every part of it”.

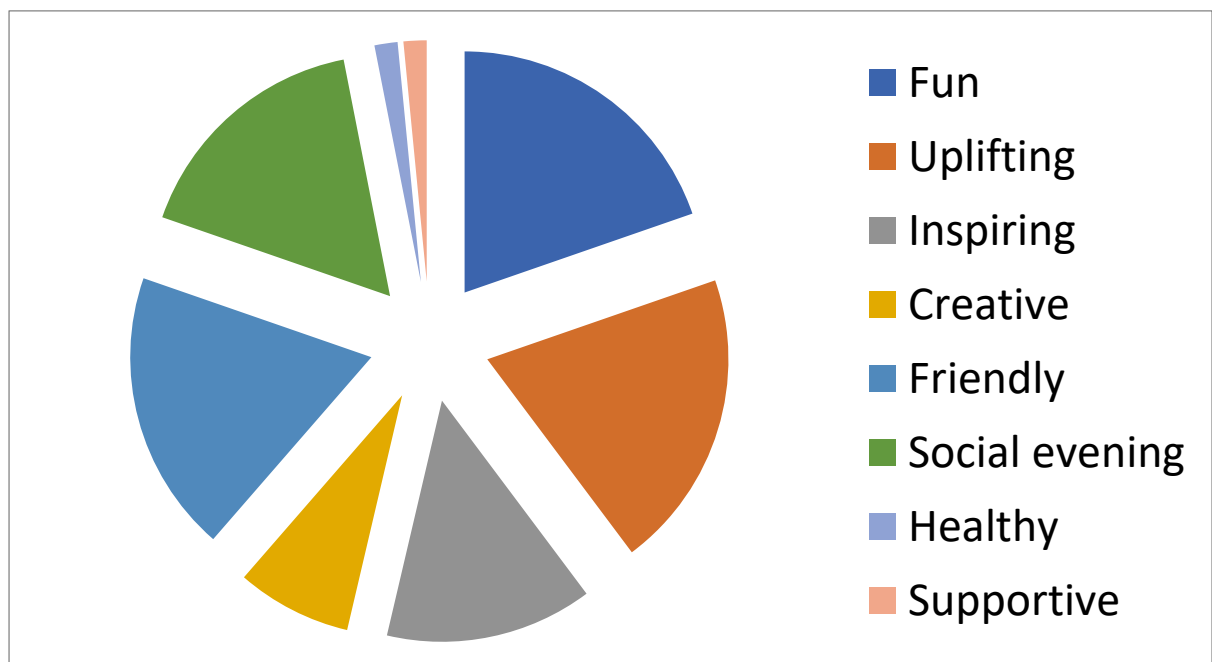
These quotes are from choir members in the recent survey and beautifully encapsulate the benefits of singing with **Rising Voices Wessex**.

Examples from the 2020 survey in response to the statements posed:

I feel that attending choir has improved my:



What in words best describes your experience of choir?



What we have learned from events of 2019 – 2020 & the future:

The biggest challenge to **Rising Voices Wessex** during the year emerged in March 2020 as a result of the national lockdown in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic – further discussed below. On the positive side of things at the beginning of April 2020 we learned that our application for Lottery support had been successful which will prove timely in mitigating the practical and financial effects of the lockdown.

The impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) and the award of a 5 year supportive grant from the People's lottery from May 2020 will produce significant changes in the choirs.

From the Covid-19 pandemic and the period of enforced “social distancing” the Music Director and her associate with the help of the Steering Group have very quickly adapted to using technology (Zoom etc.) and kept members involved in singing virtually as well as sustaining key elements of social interaction using ‘WhatsApp’ – reinforcing our understanding of the social value of **Rising Voices Wessex**.

These skills and knowledge quickly acquired will be put to good use in the longer term – well after the Covid-19 crisis – to complement regular rehearsal meetings and offer more help to members in their learning of repertoire. Maintaining contact and a sense of “fun” in singing are vital to the future of the **Rising Voices Wessex** choirs –

The “virtual” contact that is currently necessary is also vital for the choirs – sustaining a level of social support that is beneficial to members.

Two key areas of learning can be summarised :_

- Swiftly learning to use IT to maintain virtual choir activity and the depth of enthusiasm
- Commitment amongst members to continue singing and social interaction on line – reinforcing our understanding of the social value of **Rising Voices Wessex**

At the end of the financial year **Rising Voices Wessex** was delighted to learn of its successful application for an award from the National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities, that will provide a major contribution over the next 5 years to support key administrative and web support that will consolidate its infrastructure and further support its strategy of achieving long-term sustainability. The time required for the management and organisation of **Rising Voices Wessex** has mushroomed since its formation and placed tremendous demands on the time and goodwill of its Trustee volunteers, most notably Noeline Young and Jean Querol.

Looking ahead to 2021, Musical Director, Ali Sharpe, will be retiring during the spring so we shall be looking for an equally energetic and charismatic Musical Director to continue the good work – in looking at replacing her we shall revisit the possibility of separate directors for each choir but working as a team to continue to take **Rising Voices Wessex** forward.

The following lists the events involving *Rising Voices Wessex* during the past year 2019-2020. Each event provides practical learning to some degree along the lines of “What went well” and “What can we do better ”– covering both performance feedback, organisational and practical issues such as audio and other equipment set up.

Events from May 2019 – March 2020

Date	Event	Venue
1st May 2019	Stand at the Wellbeing event for Poole Hospital	The Lighthouse, Poole.
13 th May	AGM	New Church, Tuckton
20 th May	Stand for the Wellbeing event for Bournemouth Hospital	The Village Hotel, Bournemouth.
6 th June	Carers' Group	Corfe Mullen.
8 th August	Summer Fete fundraising for Marie Curie	Red House Museum, Christchurch.
10 th and 11 th June	Creativity and Wellbeing week – Singing for Fun.	St John's Church and The New Church, Tuckton.
17 th August	Summer Concert	Immanuel Church, Southborne Road.
14 th July	Big Sing with Gavin Carr – Abba.	Bournemouth School for Girls.
16 th November	CRUK event	United Reform Church Hall, Broadstone.
16 th November	Twynham Church Christmas Fair	Twynham Church, Barrack Road, Christchurch.
2 nd and 3 rd Dec.	Christmas Sing Along	St John's Church and The New Church, Tuckton.
6 th December	Carers' Group Christmas concert	St Nicholas Church, Corfe Mullen.
7 th December	Rotary Event	Westbourne Arcade
14 th December	Christmas Concert	St John's Church, Parkstone.
15 th December	Carol Singing at Castlepoint	Castlepoint
20 th December	Carol Singing, Pantomime at the Lighthouse, Poole.	The Lighthouse
24 th December	Singing on the wards at Poole Hospital	Poole Hospital
18th January 2020	Post-Christmas lunch	Cumberland Hotel.
15 th and 16 th February.	Sing from the heart workshops	Wimborne
22 nd February	Sing from the heart concert, fundraising for Marie Curie.	Wimborne.

Musical Director's report on 2019-20

The past year has been a successful concert year with many wonderful choir performances with a busy Christmas period with Rising Voices Wessex once again performing in a variety of local venues a suitable varied Christmas repertoire culminating in the annual Rising Voices Wessex Christmas Concert at St John's Church.

In the summer the BIG SING was a highly enjoyable day with an excellent performance for the participants from Rising Voices Wessex during the afternoon.

Everything has kind of been overshadowed by the Covid -19 pandemic social distancing "lockdown". This has taken the choir into totally new territory - rapidly acquiring new IT skills. Currently we are meeting twice weekly using the Zoom facility and having sourced a suitable package of software and additional equipment which enables us to meet and sing on-line.

Maintaining virtual rehearsals is really important. It enables us to meet, and communicate with one another. There are plenty of amusing moments when things go awry, but overall the benefits of being able to "check-in" with one another, speak, smile, wave and offer support....sing-a-long to a backing track or piano accompaniment are immeasurable.

The preparation for this new scenario has been considerable... and is ongoing but it is proving to be really so beneficial that I am initiating additional "Sing-A-Long" sessions throughout the week as so many people can benefit from the opportunity, during "Lockdown" to see and liaise with other people and thus continue to be involved in our community-based activity which embraces so many positive aspects of "wellbeing".

Executive Committee members (Trustees) are:

- Dr Alastair Smith (Chairman), Retired NHS Consultant, former Clinical Lead NCSI
- Mrs Noëline Young (Vice chair) – Retired NCSI Project Manager/Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Mr Rob Taylor (Treasurer) - Finance Director, Trenitalia c2c
- Mrs Jean Querol – Retired therapy radiographer and practice manager
- Dr Susi Caesar - GP in Dorset. – retiring May 2020
- Mr Roger Preston – BSO Cellist
- Ms Sarah Culley – Choir Member

Rising Voices Wessex is grateful for the support and input from these individuals during their time as Trustees.

Fundraising and grant applications:

Following initial funding in 2012 by the Dorset Cancer Network **Rising Voices Wessex** has sought and received ongoing financial support from a number of sources, these include in the past:

Macmillan Cancer Support
The Big Lottery
The People's Lottery Fund
Going for Bust.

Greggs Foundation
Bournemouth Football Club – 'The Cherries'.

During the past year:
Arts and Health South West
Pegasus Life
Westbourne Rotary Club
Waitrose

With a stated aim of self-sufficiency members are asked to offer a donation weekly towards day to day running of the choir and basic catering. When invited to perform the choirs' policy is to request that event organisers donate £50.00-£75.00 as a contribution toward costs, especially for the Musical Director. Also, where possible and appropriate 'bucket collection' is undertaken after the performance.

Further work on a 'Friends of Rising Voices', i.e. people willing to help to support the choir financially is still pending – efforts during the past year have been directed towards the **National Lottery Community Fund - Reaching Communities** application and dealing with the impact of the Coronavirus - related lockdown. It is anticipated that a more robust administrative infrastructure as result of the successful Lottery grant will facilitate development of such a scheme in future years.

Promotion and marketing:

Rising Voices Wessex has a website and uses social media Facebook and Twitter to promote the choirs, events and performances. The details of events and performances are circulated to a media group and also a number of key supporters of **Rising Voices Wessex**, such as hospital and hospices locally. Regular updates are sent to members via the admin@risingvoices.org.uk email address. To contact members during the Covid 19 crisis we have also set up a 'WhatsApp' group. Those members not using IT are kept informed by having a phone buddy.

In December 2018 **Rising Voices Wessex** presented at the Arts and Health three day Conference in Bristol. This attracted a lot of attention, interest and positive feedback.

Thanks and acknowledgments:

Thanks are due to all those who continue to support the choirs – many have done so since its foundation; the additional commitment of members ‘old and new’ is so important to the ongoing existence of both choirs. Help with fundraising, support at venues, events, making cakes are examples of the terrific support given by members. Thanks also for the administration for the day to day running of the choirs by the Steering Group.

The Trustees thank Musical Director, Ali Sharpe for her committed and enthusiastic choir direction – so important to make people want to join the choir, come and sing and enjoy singing. Thanks are due to those who support her with setting up equipment, staging etc. The Trustees also thank David Marshall and Mark Anstead for their musical support, technical support and ability to stand in for Ali Sharpe on occasions.

Capital Assets:

Rising Voices Wessex have purchased a number of items of equipment used in rehearsals and for performances. These are either stored at people’s homes or at a lock up facility – Store and Secure, as indicated. The storage costs are £500 per annum.

	Where stored	Cost
Laptop	Noeline Young	£349.00
Projector	Noeline Young	£280.00
Printer	Noeline Young	£130.00
Choir staging and podium (Separate list for detailed inventory).	Lock up	£4902.00
PA System (Separate list for detailed inventory).	David Marshall	£5437
Mid Boom box	David Marshall	£195.00
Small boom box	Ali Sharpe	£80
Music Stand	Ali Sharpe	Donated
Mobile phone	Choir member	£10.00
Catering Flasks x 2	Lock up & choir member	£31.98
Banners	Noeline Young and Jean Querol	£140.00
A Frame Advertising boards	St John’s and Jean Querol	£128.00
Display Board with cover	Lock up	£75.60
Laminator	Jean Querol	£20.00
Buckets and collection pots	Jean Querol	£59.25
Clothing stock - separate list	St John’s, Jean Querol & Noeline Young	£1,133.82
Tablet and stand	David Marshall	£541.90
Total		£12,736.55

Financial Review

Expenditure exceeded income by £7,171 in 2019-20 (on a cash basis). A summary of the year is set out in the table below:

	2018-19	2019-20
Choir contributions	11,602	9,883
Donations	6,990	1,250
Other activities inc. functions	6,536	4,988
Total receipts	25,129	16,121

Professional costs	(15,740)	(13,523)
Premises	(1,434)	(2,388)
Admin expenses	(5,514)	(4,004)
Other activities inc. functions	(4,042)	(3,377)
Total payments	(26,730)	(23,292)

Surplus/(deficit)	(1,602)	(7,171)
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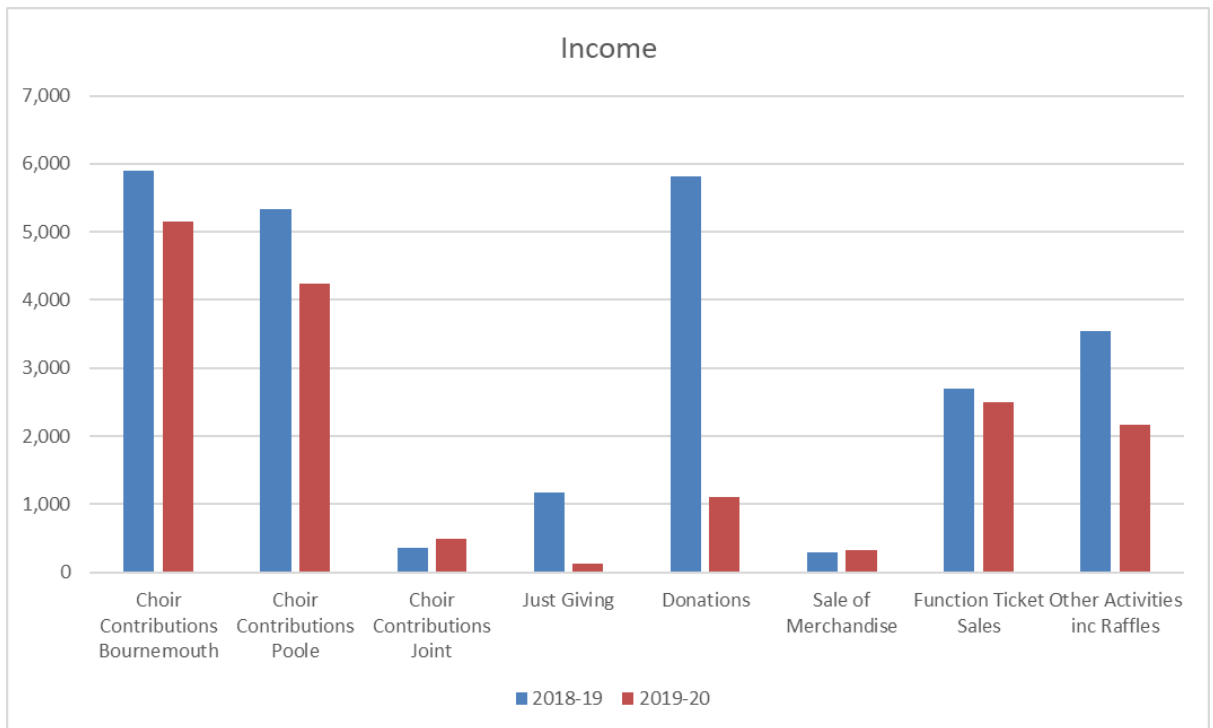
Opening cash	20,661	19,059
Cashflow	(1,602)	(7,171)
Closing cash	19,059	11,888

Income:

Income of £16,121 (2018-19: £25,129) was made up of £9,883 in contributions from the members of the choir, £1,250 of one-off donations and £4,988 of other income including bucket collections, fundraising, big sing and sales of clothing. This represents a significant decrease of £9,008 from 18-19 due to:

- A reduction in choir fees of £1,719, primarily a reduction in Poole contributions of £1,091.
- A reduction in one-off donations of £4,700 (2018/19 included donations from Pegasus, AHSW and the Charities Trust totalling £4,000).
- A reduction in other activities of £1,377

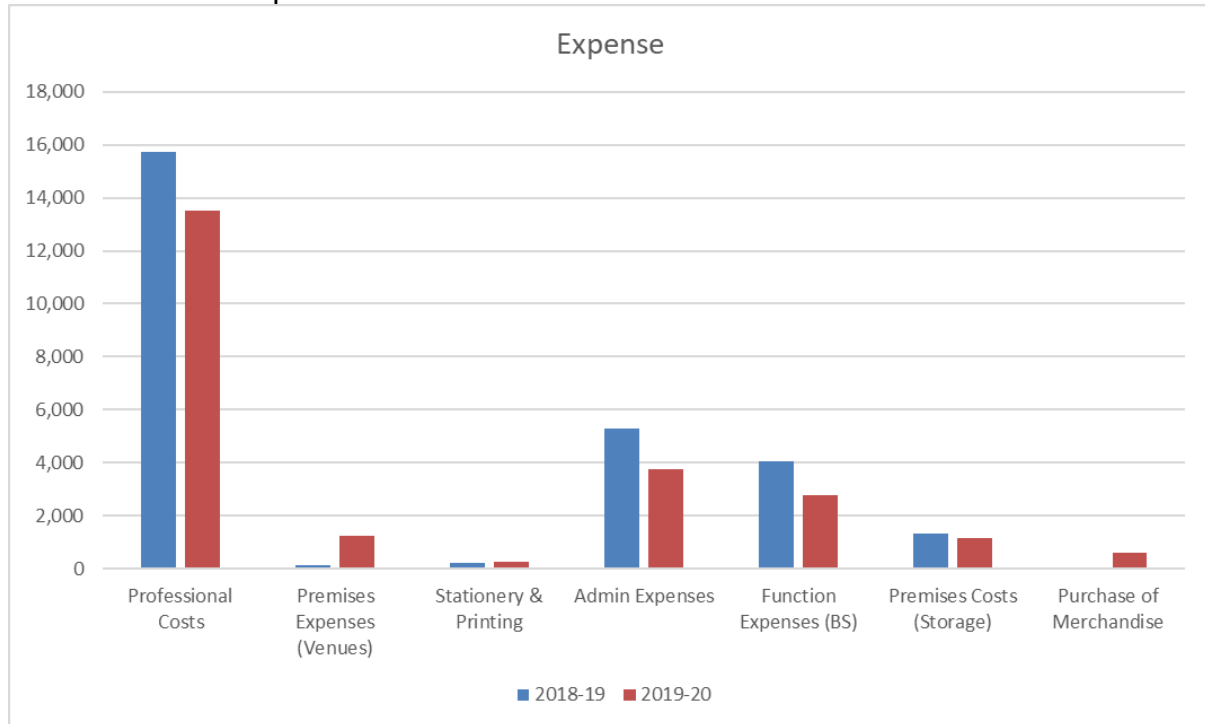
A breakdown of income is shown below:



Expenditure:

Expenditure was £23,292 in the year (2018-19 £26,730). 58% of this (£13,523) relates to fees for the choir leads. Other costs include ongoing IT costs (£2,835), accommodation for regular meetings and one-off events (£2,388) and Big Sing costs (£2,465).

A breakdown of expenditure is shown below:

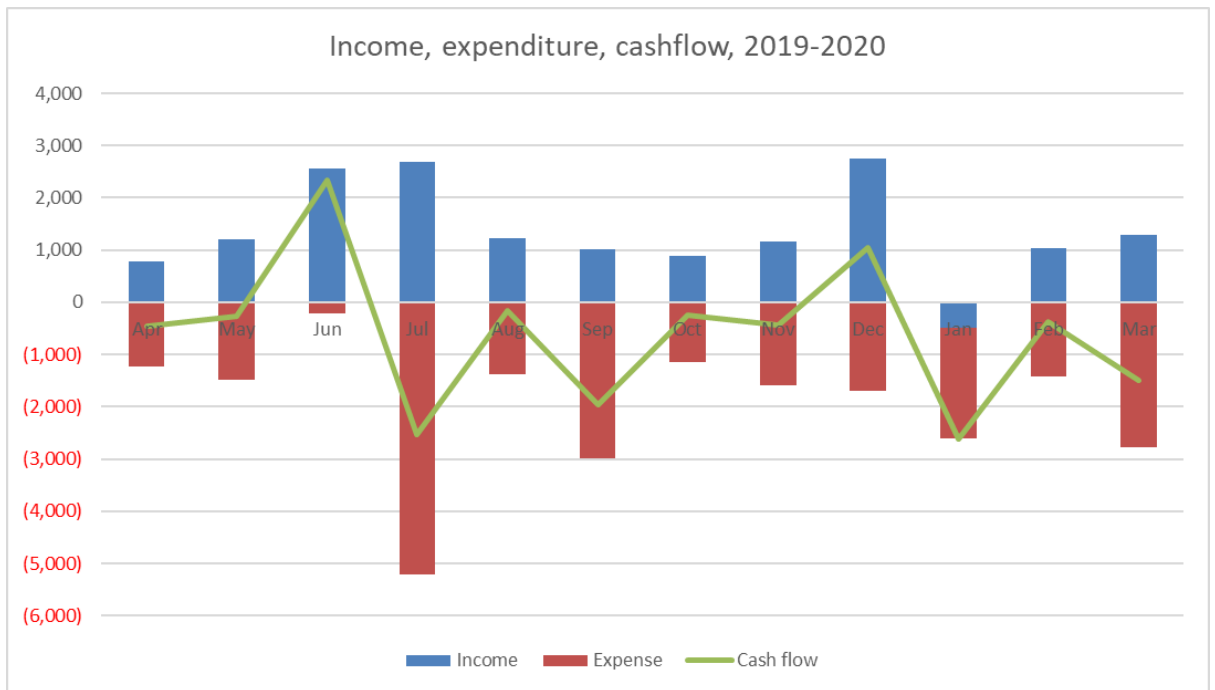


Cash:

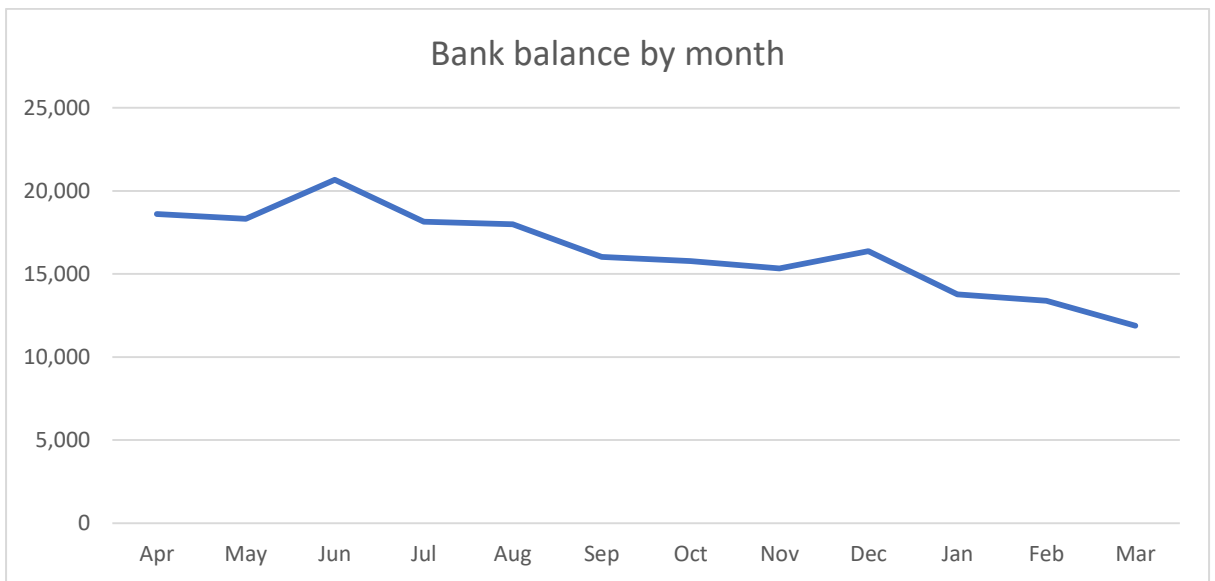
The cash balance remains healthy, with £11,888 in the bank at 31 March 2020. The opening cash balance was £19,059. The decrease in the cash balance in the year reflects expenditure exceeding income as set out above.

Rising Voices' policy is to maintain cash reserves of at least 6 month's normal trading. We have approximately 19 months of reserves at current income and expenditure rates.

The monthly cash flow is shown below.



The monthly bank balance is set out below:



Statement of Executive Committee's responsibilities:

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the incoming resources and application of resources for that period.

On behalf of the Executive Committee



Chairman Dr Alastair Smith Date – 21st May 2020