



Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020

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Introduction, Background and Context

The Millicent Singers is a four part adult choir based in Clane, County Kildare. The choir was founded in 1996 under the directorship of Michael Weedle.

The choir has been developing as a choral group for the last 20 years and is celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2016

As a choir, Millicent Singers is continuing to develop and has forged relationships with some of Ireland's leading performers.

The choir competes regularly in choral competitions and in 2014 won first place in the SATB section of the Sligo International Choral Festival.

The choir sets out below its strategic ambitions for the next four years to 2020.

This is a 'living ' document and while providing a strong framework for the choir's development over the coming years can and will change and evolve depending on the choirs changing ambitions and aspirations.

As such this document will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis going forward by the committee of the day.

Summary & Strategic Themes

Musical Direction and Innovation

Millicent Singers will continue to push the boundaries of the choir's creative thinking and musical repertoire with emphasis on a professional and enjoyable musical performance for choir and audiences.

The choir will develop a high musical standard, repertoire and performance ethic which challenges the choir, reaches a high level of competitive and performance standard and brings choral music to a wide and varied audience.

Artistic Achievement and Performance Excellence

Develop existing and innovative approaches to enhance the choir's ability and performance capability using techniques ranging from voice development to performance techniques

Collaboration

Committed to building partnerships and sharing experiences with other Choral Societies, Statutory bodies e.g. AOIC, colleagues, funders (e.g. Kildare County Council) and the public to further enhance the impact and reach of the Millicent Singers.

Effective Management & Governance

Maintain strong management and administration structures with robust financial administrative and planning processes and effective succession planning.

Sign up to and adhere to 'The Governance Code' for non-statutory societies.

Resourcing and Learning Experience

Create a forum within the choir for the recruitment and development of new members, their seamless induction into choral singing and being part of a vibrant choir community so that the experience can be an enriching learning opportunity and activity.

Choir Values and Culture Development

Develop a strong Culture and Values driven choir which reflects the community based and collaborative ethos of the members and provides an environment which is warm, welcoming and fun to be part of while aspiring to be the 'best that we can be' in our choral singing and performing ambitions.

Approach to achieving Strategic Goals

Committed to maintaining strong choir governance and administration processes that engender confidence, continuity and sustainability.

Committed to maintaining a high standard of professional and innovative musical directorship which positions Millicent Singers as a strong and well respected choir.

Committed to on-going review and revision as necessary of strategic goals to reflect the objectives and aspiration of the members, its audiences and associated statutory bodies.

Mission

The Millicent Singers will be leaders in choral music in County Kildare and will strive to bring their music and performances to as wide a community as possible.

By creating a welcoming and friendly choir the Millicent Singers will demonstrate to their members and audience that there is more to the essence of the choir than simply singing and performing.

Musically the Millicent Singers will constantly challenge their members with choral works that create a challenge but also entertain and satisfy our audience members.

The Millicent Singers view success in terms of member and audience satisfaction first and foremost and competition success will be an added bonus.

Millicent Singers will build and sustain a choral group which can perform to the highest standards of the choir's ability, is challenged musically, professionally directed and brings the joy of choral music to a wide variety of audiences and communities and provides its members with an opportunity for enjoyment and learning.

Core Values

Excellence

A strong choir focused on developing its potential to be 'the best it can be' through high standards of musical directorship and performance at all times.

Inspiration

Using a combination of challenging and inspiring teaching, learning and experienced based methods provide an environment that ignites a passion for choral music in all choir members.

Inclusion

Create an environment that is inclusive, community based, fun-filled and enjoyable both for choir members and its audiences

Innovation

To innovate or challenge the status quo in adopting new programmes and repertoire, best teaching and learning practices and performance and competition environments

Collaboration

Continuously seeking to collaborate and embrace other statutory and choral based groups and musical environments to broaden the outlook and breadth of the choir and enhance its capability and reach

Strategic Theme: Musical Direction and Innovation

Objective 1

Continue and maintain the very high standards of musical directorship already present, always reflecting suitable qualification, experience and leadership for this key position.

Measurement

A Musical Director who leads the choir with ambition, surety, innovation and experience and is in line with the ethos and culture of the choir.

Timing

On-going from 2016.

Objective 2

Develop a programme of workshops and learning forums to enhance the capability of the choir as a collective and as individuals in areas ranging from but not limited to voice development, performance capability and singing technique.

Measurement

A formal programme of workshops, rehearsal processes i.e. advance notification of rehearsal plan and performance classes with take away course material to enhance the overall capability of the choir.

Timing

Rehearsals weekly. Workshop, one annually. Ad hoc courses where appropriate.

Objective 3

The current broad selection of music has received positive feedback from choir and audience with some individual preferences and likes expressed.

Continue to look for opportunities to widen and broaden the repertoire of the choir with music that is technically challenging, appeals to audiences and provides an opportunity for the choir to reach high standards of performance while enjoying the experience.

Measurement

A programme of music developed by the Musical Director and published 12 months in advance covering concerts, competition and ad hoc events that provides a musical experience which transcends genres, musical styles and repertoires.

Timing

From 2016 annually

Strategic Theme: Artistic Achievement and Performance Excellence

Objective 1

Create a series of learning aids to enhance the capability of the choir as a collective and as individuals

- Pre-recorded line parts on CD, SoundCloud or YouTube
- Identify a basic sight reading course, online or physical that would enhance the capability of members who are not proficient in that area
- Ensure ongoing high level of attendance (minimum 75%) at rehearsals for all members
- Streamline the 'note bashing' process at rehearsal to improve effectiveness of this process.

- Establish well constructed sectional rehearsals with advance preparation to optimise time available and efficiency of process
- Construct a programme of continuous new material that does not overload the system with too much learning while at the same time trying to maintain the variety and innovation which is recognised as a difficult task

Measurement

A clear identifiable and documented learning programme for choir members over the course of a term with learning aids where appropriate.

Timing

As is. Develop annually and publish.

Objective 2

Create a performance environment for both concert and competition that combines artistic excellence with enjoyment and removes the 'fear factor'.

Measurement

- Establish a 'performance coordinator' role who working under the guidance of the Musical Director would have responsibility for coordinating the performance logistics and ensuring a well prepared and visually appealing choir for all performances
- Build in formal Performance Rehearsals to the overall rehearsal / workshop agenda
- Dress code enhancement. Men to have an alternative to the current uniform for 'informal performances. Ladies to have an alternative to the current uniform which may need modernising and could cover formal / informal occasions.

Timing

Develop during 2016 and implement 2017

Objective 3

Continuously look for opportunities to widen and strengthen competition and performance objectives.

Measurement

- Identify choral festivals to compete at highest level annually with suggested two-year cycle for those festivals that are particularly challenging i.e. Cork International Choral Festival
- Target performances outside the current local remit either throughout Ireland or even abroad. e.g Wales, on a two-year cycle
- Perform at selected charitable events to return something to our audiences and community
- Perform at occasional community events i.e. Weddings where viable from a resource and financial perspective

Timing

During 2016/2017 the Committee, with support from the Musical Director, will draw up a 'Performance Framework ' for next 3 years to include concerts, competition, charitable events and 'on the road ' events for consideration / endorsement by choir.

Strategic Theme: Collaboration

Objective 1

Continue to foster relationships with the Association of Irish Choirs (AOIC) and enhance our collaborative role with that organisation to avail of the programmes and opportunities for choral groups provided.

Measurement

Appoint a liaison nominee to work with AOIC to develop opportunities for choir development

Timing

Post AGM 2016

Objective 2

Actively pursue opportunities for funding and selective potential performance opportunities with Kildare County Council (KCC) to widen exposure of choir and avail of further development opportunities.

Measurement

- Specific role established as part of choir committee secretarial brief
- Grant allocation achieved each year as part of overall choir funding
- Performance opportunities as part of KCC Arts promotion weeks etc.

Timing

From 2017

Objective 3

Continue to find opportunities to collaborate for performance purpose with other choirs and individual performers.

Measurement

Musical Director (with very strong knowledge and contacts in this area) to identify i) opportunities for collaborative performances that will enhance the Millicent choirs capability and reputation and ii) also identify opportunities for the development of other choirs and individuals by performing with Millicent Singers.

Timing

2016 onwards

Strategic Theme: Effective Management, Administration & Governance

Objective 1

Continue Millicent Singers as an Unincorporated Choral Society (no limited liability) affiliated to the AOIC.

Establish and Sustain a strong Administrative and Management structure for the choir which ensures robust financial and administrative processes, and adheres to transparent and sustainable Governance criteria for 'not for profit' organisations.

Measurement

- Maintain unincorporated status and finalise this at committee level
- Sign up to and adhere to The Governance Code for not for profit organisations (Tier 1 Organisation)
- Establish a committee annually (elected at AGM) comprising Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, PR & Communications Officer, Social & Culture Officer with Musical Director co-opted as essential ex officio member (non-elected)
- Establish formal succession planning process for committee to ensure continuity and sustainability of committee
- Establish a PR & Communications role for the choir committee (see above) to enhance the communication structures for the choir internally and externally and to create a PR agenda which promotes the choirs activities and optimises performance attendances, reputation and collaboration opportunities

- Establish a Social and Culture officer role (see above) to promote and activate the strong community ethos of the choir to enjoy and have fun in a variety of social activities.

Timing

Ongoing from 2016 AGM

Objective 2

Establish a formal membership guideline induction booklet covering all aspects of choir membership. Given unincorporated status consider establishing a formal Choir Constitution. Creation of a basic constitution to be discussed and agreed by Choir committee.

Measurement

Continue building on the current published membership guidelines documented that complies with AOIC Governance requirements and provides clear and comprehensive guidelines for membership of the choir for existing and new members

Establish a formal Constitution covering all aspects of choir activity (sample available from AOIC). To be discussed and agreed by committee before being approved by the membership at a general meeting.

Objective 3

Two choir terms (September to December and January to early June) with a 'summer' break is the preferred timings for activity with occasional 'summer' activities where feasible from a resource and financial perspective.

Timing

From September 2016

Objective 4

Establish Strong Financial Control and Management that is transparent and ensures financial stability for the choir and can underpin future development aspirations (Appendix 3 will contain more on this)

Measurement

- Annual Budget signed off at AGM
- Target a routine surplus of minimum €2500 per annum from membership subscriptions, concerts, grants etc. as a sustainable objective
- Annual accounts produced each year for AGM sign off by treasurer (Appendix 2 which will follow)
- Minimum of two cheque signatories required for all expenditure items
- Subs to review each AGM but current level €160 pa is satisfactory / acceptable
- Financial 'Charitable' donations ' should not be established. Instead charitable performances will be offered.
- Establish a 'Friends of Millicent Singers ' initiative which will enable those interested to contribute to the choirs financial resource in return for exposure on performance programmes etc.
- Continue with very successful Quiz night for choir and friends which contributes financially and provides an excellent social opportunity
- Continue to seek Arts grants where feasible / available

Timing

From 2016 ongoing

Objective 5

Develop a detailed choir Programme Plan for each year (based on this strategic framework) and publish in advance of year commencement

Measurement

Programme Plan published by committee. (Appendix 1 to be added at a later date)

Timing

Annually

Strategic Theme: Resourcing and Learning Experience

Objective 1

- Establish optimal membership numbers for the choir as whole with a broad framework for numbers in each line. (SATB)
- Establish a pipeline for recruitment for all sections to ensure continuity
- Establish specific criteria for membership, to include musical capability, culture and values compatibility and commitment and sustainability.
- Establish a formal induction process for new members to include gradual exposure to repertoire in a measured way to avoid overload, learning aids to assist music learning.
- Appointment a formal mentor for each new recruit to assist in the induction process
- Continue the student scheme to encourage new younger members to join
- Consider an occasional performance for schools , community groups or societies to expose the joy of choral singing and encourage possible recruits.
- Establish an annual open rehearsal.
- Recruitment forum in January each year

Measurement

- Musical Director to outline his plan for choir construct, numbers, balance etc.
- Musical Director to establish recruitment criteria and process
- Formalise an annual 'recruitment rehearsal' in January each year followed by auditions to identify new recruits with a view to acclimatising during January to June term and potential performance from following September all to be decided at the discretion of Musical Director
- Establish one to one mentors for new recruits to assist in the induction process
- Formalise a feedback process after three to six months for new members to express their views on the new member experience for future learning

Timing

Prior to 2016/17 term commencement

Strategic Theme: Values and Culture Development

Objective

Continue to develop a set of Values and a unique Culture for the Millicent Singers that supports and enhances the musical ambitions but also makes the choir experience challenging, enjoyable, fun to be part of and provides a community social outlet for members.

Measurement

Communicate and socialise the Values and Culture outlined in this document with the rest of the choir and seek feedback on same to fine tune and finalise.

Following on from successful survey of members and audiences. actively listen to and take on board the opinions and refresh the audience survey on a regular basis

Appoint a Committee member with responsibility for Social and Culture development and scheduling of activities during the year

Create a manageable programme of events during the year which combines performance, rehearsals and social events without overloading the activity level. Committee to discuss and agree.

Timing

On-going through 2016 and beyond

APPENDICES

1 Annual Programme Plan

2 Choir Membership Guidelines / Constitution

3 Annual Budget / Three Year Plan / Management Accounts

4. Annual Music Portfolio / Plan (will follow in due course)