

SOCA Rulebook

Approved by Members 15th November 2025

1. NAME

The name of the Association shall be the Somerset Organists' and Choirs' Association.

2. OBJECTS

The objects of the Association shall be to support and promote the interests of those in (or having connections with) Somerset, who are concerned with organs of any type, the study and performance of organ and/or choral music whether in a religious or secular context; and to spread public knowledge and appreciation of such music. In pursuit of these objects, it may:

- arrange lectures; demonstrations; debates; and masterclasses or workshops offering practical guidance;
- provide opportunities to assist knowledge and understanding of organ history, design and construction; choral leadership; and both organ and choral performance and repertoire;
- offer concerts, recitals, and other such opportunities, for the benefit of Members, and to further the public enjoyment and appreciation of organ and choral music;
- organise group visits to see, hear and play organs of particular interest;
- offer encouragement and opportunity for music students to gain performing experience;
- enter upon any of the above activities either in its sole right, or in partnership with some other appropriate organisation;
- provide a medium through which Members can offer their services as singers, organists and/or teachers, and where any vacancies for organists, choral directors and singers, or deputising opportunities for such, can be advertised;
- circulate any news and information likely to be of interest to Members;
- facilitate opportunities (formal or otherwise) to bring together organists, choral directors and singers, for mutual support and encouragement, sharing of experience, and exchange of information and advice;
- do such other lawful things as may be necessary or desirable to achieving these objectives.

3. MEMBERSHIP

(a) Categories. Membership shall be open to any person who is interested in organs, organ or choral music in any form, or any other comparable kind of music. The categories of Member shall be:

- Honorary Membership (conferred by the Committee);
- Ordinary Membership (open to application);
- Junior Membership (for those not exceeding age 18, and/or studying in full-time education, at start of the subscription period – other than mature students).

Choirs may be represented informally, through individual Members.

The Committee may decline any application, whether for Ordinary or Junior Membership, at its absolute discretion.

(b) Subscriptions. Each Ordinary Member shall pay an annual subscription. The Junior category may, if desired, be divided into free and subscription-paying bands, distinguished by age, working status, or other criteria. Subscription rate(s) shall be determined from time to time by Members in General Meeting. Membership shall become effective on payment of a Member's first subscription. Renewal subscriptions shall fall due on 1st January each year. A Member joining on or after 1st July in any year shall pay half the annual rate, to cover the period up to his/her first renewal date.

(c) Non-member participation. Members' family may, where practical, attend Association events and activities on the same terms as Members. Members of other organists' associations, members of choirs otherwise represented within the Membership, and other non-members of the Association, will be welcome to attend such occasions at discretion of the Committee, and on such conditions as the Committee may determine.

(d) Termination. A Member shall cease to be a Member:

- by failure to pay a subscription at the due rate, within three months following the renewal date; however, full rights will continue to apply during the three months' grace; and a Member may be reinstated on payment of an overdue subscription;
- by expulsion, on resolution of a properly constituted meeting of the Committee, at which the Member shall be entitled to make representations, either in person, or through a third party, or in writing; the Committee shall be the arbiters of sufficient cause, and the adequacy of evidence; and they may also temporarily suspend a Membership during investigation if considered necessary, pending resolution of a case;
- by resignation in writing (duly signed) to the Honorary Secretary.

(e) Authority. No Member may commit the Association in any way, without the authorisation of the Committee.

4. GENERAL MEETINGS

(a) AGM. An Annual General Meeting of Members shall be held in November each year, save that the Committee may for good reason call the meeting at some other time. At the Annual General Meeting, Officers' reports and accounts for the year shall be received and considered; any other matters relevant to the effective management of the Association may be considered and determined; and Officers, Committee Members and an Independent Examiner (who should not be a member of the Committee, nor necessarily of the Association) shall be elected.

(b) EOGM. An Extraordinary General Meeting of Members may be called by the Committee at any time; or on the written and signed petition of at least three Members, with an accompanying agenda, delivered to the Honorary Secretary.

(c) Notice. General Meetings shall be called on at least twenty-one days' notice sent to each Member. Notices may be sent by post to a Member's latest known address, allowing three working days for delivery; or by e-mail to the Member's latest known e-mail address.

(d) Quorum. The quorum for a General Meeting shall be six Members present in person (and by video link, if provided at the discretion of the Committee). If a quorum is not present within thirty minutes of the appointed time, then in the case of a Meeting called by the Committee the Meeting shall be adjourned, and reconvened on notice to Members as in 4c above; or in the case of one called on a petition of Members, the Meeting shall be dissolved. The quorum for such a reconvened Meeting shall be two Members present as above.

5. OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

(a) The Officers of the Association shall be:

President; Vice President; Honorary Secretary; Honorary Treasurer; Honorary Membership Secretary. Except for the Presidency, a Member may hold two Offices concurrently, if it is considered desirable.

(b) Management. The affairs of the Association shall be managed by a Committee, consisting of the Officers (as 5a above), together with such Members as shall be elected or appointed as Ordinary Committee Members, to an overall maximum not exceeding twelve voting Members.

(c) Nomination/election. Officers and Committee Members shall be elected at Annual General Meeting, from among the Membership of the Association, to serve until the next AGM. When a candidate for President is nominated by the Committee and has not served in that capacity in the preceding year, that Member shall be deemed duly elected. All other candidates shall be proposed and seconded by Members, either in writing to the Honorary Secretary, or else from the floor of the Meeting, with (in all cases) the candidate confirming assent. Nominations by Members shall be considered equally, by whichever method they are made. When a position is contested, voting shall if possible be by written poll, with the Member receiving the greatest number of votes being declared elected.

(d) Vacancies. Any vacancies remaining on the Committee after the AGM, or occurring during the year, may be filled by the Committee appointing Members to serve with full voting rights until the next AGM. The Committee may continue to act notwithstanding any vacancies in its number, provided all necessary functions can be covered.

(e) Re-election. Any Officer or Committee Member shall be eligible for re-election, subject to nomination as in 5c above; save that a Member may only be re-elected President for a second or subsequent year in succession, if there is no other candidate.

(f) Quorum. At any Meeting of the Committee, 50%-plus-one of the voting Members, present in person (and by video link, if provided at the discretion of the Committee), or meeting wholly online if the Committee so determines, shall constitute a quorum. In calculating the quorum, any fractions are to be rounded down.

(g) Obligations. Each Member, on first election or appointment to the Committee, shall sign a copy of the Rules to signify knowledge and acceptance; this to be passed to the Honorary Secretary (or whoever else the Committee may determine) for safe keeping.

(h) Property. The Committee is responsible for the protection of the Association's assets and for authorising commitments, and should be satisfied that reasonable measures are in place for safeguarding its funds, records and other property, with specific duties (including the signing of contracts) delegated to such Officers and/or other Members as it shall nominate from time to time. On leaving Office (or at some earlier time if required), any person(s) to whom some such function has been delegated, should surrender, or pass on to any successor-in-office, in a timely manner, all official records of the Association in his/her custody together with any property lent by the Association in connection with his/her duties, as may be called for; and also, access to any other Association property (such as bank accounts) under the Member's sole/joint control or held in his/her name.

(j) Safeguarding. The Committee should ensure that an adequate Safeguarding Policy is maintained, covering all those involved in any way with the Association.

(k) GDPR. The Committee is also responsible for ensuring that personal data is processed in accordance with the Association's Data Privacy Notice.

(l) Use of funds. The funds and other property of the Association shall be applied solely to the purposes set out in Clause 2 above; and no payment from Association funds shall be made to any Officer or Committee Member, either in cash or in kind, in respect of the customary duties of Office. Nonetheless, a modest fee or gratuity may be offered to a Member who is engaged to perform or present in a professional capacity, at an Association event that is open to the public, and where a fee would ordinarily be paid.

(m) Online responsibilities. The Committee should appoint (a) suitable person(s) to maintain and administer the Association's website, and any other online presence, under its direction and supervision. The web-master, and any social media account holder on behalf of the Association, should signify acceptance of the Rules in the same way as Committee Members (see 5g above).

(n) Guest attendance. The Committee may invite any person to attend during a Committee Meeting in furtherance of its business, in a non-voting capacity.

6. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

(a) Chair. General Meetings and Committee Meetings should normally be chaired by the President if present, or otherwise by the Vice President. If both are absent but the Meeting is quorate, then the Members present may appoint one of their number to chair the Meeting.

(b) Adjournment. The person chairing a Meeting may, at his/her discretion, adjourn the Meeting from time to time and from place to place, provided that at least all those present at the adjournment are informed when and where the Meeting is to be reconvened; and that when practical, notice is extended to all those entitled to attend the original Meeting.

(c) Voting. At any Meeting, all matters (save for certain elections, see 5c above) shall be resolved by a simple majority of votes cast by those present, whether in person or online. In the case of an equality of votes, the status quo shall prevail; or if inapplicable, the person chairing the Meeting shall have a casting vote.

(d) Rulings. During the conduct of a Meeting, a ruling from the Chair on any matter shall be final.

7. GENERAL

(a) Incorporated Association of Organists. The Association shall seek to maintain its affiliation to the IAO. The Committee may, each year, nominate a Member of the Association as its 'IAO Partner,' to attend, represent the Association, and vote, at General Meetings of the IAO.

(b) Rule book. Members should have access, from time of joining, to the Rules of the Association.

(c) Rule changes. These Rules shall not be altered, added to, or deleted, except by resolution of Members in General Meeting.

(d) Closure. If upon the winding up or dissolution of the Association, there remains after the satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities any property whatsoever, it may be transferred to another not-for-profit organisation chosen by the Members, subject always to approval in General Meeting. Surviving records (excepting strictly confidential material) may similarly be offered to a suitable repository.