

## Wakefield Cathedral DRAFT Peer Review Action Plan

### Background

The Association of English Cathedrals offers a Peer Review to each cathedral where three external reviewers explore all areas of the cathedral's work. Wakefield was visited by three Peer Reviewers on 7th and 8th March 2023 and we are grateful for their time, thoughtfulness, and sensitivity. Their Report was submitted on 21st March 2023.

Senior Management Team has drafted this response and proposed next steps, which Chapter is invited to comment on.

### Areas of good practice and commentary

Comment	SMT Response
<i>The music and education work with young people is something to be celebrated. The Cathedral is doing extensive work in both areas and this (given the very limited resource) is something which we believe is being delivered very well.</i>	<p>We agree and would want to affirm the excellent work done by our musicians and community outreach officer. This is particularly impressive given the pandemic, limited resources, and the impact of staff turnover. The appointment of permanent full-time musicians and a signing teacher is complete and will bring stability and scope for further development to our musical offering. This will include particular attention to further diversifying the membership of our choirs.</p> <p>Our community outreach work, particularly with schools, is excellent and relies heavily on a committed and effective post-holder. We will consider whether we can attract further grant-funded resource for this work.</p>
<i>The stakeholder relations are strong and growing (particularly with the Dean and Canon Missioner) and the Cathedral is extremely well placed within a number of key areas to influence future developments and be included within future plans.</i>	We are grateful for the affirmation and believe the cathedral does have an increasingly prominent profile in the city / district. The development of a new Cathedral Partners' Forum will allow us to seek out and hear a wider range of voices, hopefully bringing a new level of engagement and challenge from key individuals / groups in the area, and helping us better understand how we are perceived 'outside'.
<i>There is a strong culture of collective working within the staff team</i>	We agree and recognise the hard work of a small staff team during an unsettled time with great pressure. What is achieved with limited resources is highly impressive and not widely recognised outside Chapter / SMT. We have taken steps to recognise and affirm our staff, the introduction of regular one-to-one meetings with line managers, more regular social events, and an additional paid holiday allowance for all employees over the Christmas 2023 break.

### Recommendations and next steps

Recommendation	SMT Response	Next steps	SRO	Timeline
<i>We would recommend getting an operational plan in place as soon as is</i>	The next step is for Chapter to consider the Peer Review report	Chapter Awayday in October 2023 will consider any 'refreshing' of the	SMT	Chapter Awayday – October 2023

<p><i>practicable with the new Chief Operating Officer in post.</i></p>	<p>and to review our <i>Firm in Hope</i> strategic vision to consider what may need refreshing. SMT can then start identifying the ‘markers and metrics’ that would be the core of the implementation / operational plan. Work is currently on hold while we concentrate on filling vacant roles and inducting / embedding new staff.</p>	<p>strategic vision which may be needed, and SMT will work on implementation plan. This will draw on the new COO’s initial analysis for an operational plan.</p>		<p>Autumn 2023 – implementation and operational plan finalised and offered to Chapter for feedback in Spring 2024</p>
<p><i>Getting buy in from staff and volunteers on the plan, once written, needs considerable thought and planning.</i></p>	<p>We agree this is important, though we are conscious of the challenges. This is an area where the pandemic and its effects, as well as the church on staff, has made it much harder to sustain relationships and communication.</p>	<p>We will review this in detail once the operational plan is finalised. Review of the pattern of staff meetings (see below) will allow opportunity to consider how and when we both hear their views and help them own the direction of travel.</p>	<p>SMT</p>	<p>Spring 2024</p>
	<p>We recognise the wider point that volunteers may be feeling under-appreciated and less involved in shaping decisions. This is a consequence of the rupture of the pandemic (which required making difficult decisions quickly and centrally) and the severely reduced staff time because of turnover.</p>	<p>The first step with the volunteers is to reinstitute a pattern of regular meetings to thank / celebrate them as well as offering training / passing on key messages.</p> <p>We are also working to fund and recruit a Volunteer Co-ordinator to oversee volunteer recruitment and relations, which will help with volunteer involvement in the strategy and its implementation.</p>	<p>Sub-Dean</p>	<p>Autumn 2023 / Spring 2024</p>
<p><i>We would advise to think very carefully about how Treacy Hall can bring back some level of revenue and</i></p>	<p>We accept this is a major piece of the jigsaw and has occupied significant senior staff time in 2022-3. Our current approach of</p>	<p>Review pattern of bookings and income to ‘optimise our assets for mission’ and be a more energetic</p>	<p>Sub-Dean/ Devt Mgr</p>	<p>Spring 2024</p>

<p><i>footfall, but until the plans are established, a volunteer run community drop in might provide an interim solution – something which the volunteers may value highly and would bring back some of the benefit which the space delivers to them to meet and socialise.</i></p>	<p>working with a range of external groups which has generated three ongoing bookings and a large number of one-off or short-term bookings. With the help of an external consultant, we are calling this a ‘Discovery Phase’ try and understand the area’s needs / possibilities, seeing the space in this phase as a gift for offering to others for missional rather than financial return.</p>	<p>‘partner for mission’ in the city and district.</p> <p>An Events Officer role has been scoped and funded. Recruiting to this post will be a key step in identifying, booking, and staffing more events, which will generate income and serve the local community.</p>		
	<p>The Mothers’ Union has offered a weekly café from October which will be a good opportunity to increase footfall to Treacy Hall.</p>	<p>Review the costs, income, and effect of this after the eight-week trial.</p>	<p>Devt Mgr</p>	<p>January 2024</p>
	<p>We do not currently have the vision or capacity to run a catering operation with our existing finance and staff. Experience of an internally-run café suggests we are unlikely to be able to do this, even if desired, in the near future.</p>	<p>We will explore whether there are options for a commercial partnership for a catering operation, mindful of the needs of the cathedral’s existing worship and groups / activities.</p>	<p>Devt Mgr</p>	<p>Spring 2024</p>
	<p>One of our strategic priorities is ‘a cathedral for the whole diocese’ and there is more scope for using Tracey Hall as a venue for parish / deanery events.</p>	<p>There is already substantial engagement with diocesan structures, through the Dean’s and Sub-Dean’s participation in a range of meetings / groups / teaching. Wider engagement in the diocese, such as offering preaching or service cover, has been curtailed by covering for staff shortages. A next step will be meeting Area Deans in nearby deaneries, to offer the space for away days / meetings.</p>	<p>Dean</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p><i>Once the new Communications Officer is in place, one of the key priorities needs to be on internal communications. The strategic understanding of priorities is strong at Chapter and senior management level, but this needs to be explained and communicated further down the chain.</i></p>	<p>We recognise this is a problem particularly with a small number of staff in very different roles – in a ‘flat’ and rather pressured organisation, we don’t have the need/scope for a clear hierarchical or departmental structure. This sometimes leads to too many conversations (e.g. overlapping conversations between different groups about the same topic) and sometimes to too few conversations (e.g. key factors being missed because it wasn’t clear who needed to be brought into a conversation).</p> <p>We have already made good progress with management of the diary and planning of meetings in advance. This has reduced friction and made communication clearer.</p> <p>Regular one-to-ones with staff and line managers are already improving communication.</p>	<p>Once there is a full staff complement in early 2024, we will want to consider the range, purpose, and function of different meetings and how these might evolve to help better two-way communication.</p> <p>A small step would be bringing all staff onto the shared diary so that there is greater awareness of where people are and when they can be reached.</p>	<p>COO Sub-Dean</p>	<p>Early 2024</p>
<p><i>Following the introduction of an operational plan and the bedding in of new staff, perhaps a period of consolidation would be welcomed by existing staff.</i></p>	<p>We agree with this assessment, and are deeply conscious of the strain placed on our small, hard-working staff team by the pandemic and by unexpected high staff turnover. We have already started to address staff wellbeing and morale for instance by more regular social gatherings and more</p>	<p>The work identified in the previous point stands here too, and we hope that the imminent filling of outstanding staff vacancies will lead to a more settled state for the team.</p>	<p>COO</p>	<p>Nearing completion</p>

	<p>alertness to these questions in one-to-one meetings with line managers. We now also have provision of a priest outside the cathedral establishment who is available informally to staff for conversation and support.</p>			
<p><i>Opportunities like the Rhubarb Festival and Gaia present real opportunities to bring higher numbers of visitors into the Cathedral, but these opportunities need to be properly planned and staffed in order to give the Cathedral the best chance of success.</i></p>	<p>We agree. The appointment of a new Development Manager, and the funding secured for an Events management role, will considerably increase our capacity to make connections with outside groups, and plan / run / staff events. In particular, there will now be key staff with events management as part of their skillset and job descriptions, rather than relying heavily on vergers / volunteers.</p>	<p>Recruitment of new Events Officer</p>	<p>Devt Mgr</p>	<p>For January 2024 start</p>
		<p>Reinstitute regular diary meetings, to secure a better overview of bookings and events. This strategic overview will allow us to identify gaps and better align what we offer with our priorities.</p>	<p>Sub-Dean</p>	<p>Done</p>

14th November 2023