

CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL VISITATION

At the request of the Chapter of Chelmsford Cathedral, the Bishop of Chelmsford commissioned a team led by Bishop Graeme Knowles to carry out a Visitation of the Cathedral. The purpose of the Visitation was to seek affirmation for progress so far, engagement in a range of areas of cathedral life, and useful consultancy for the journey ahead. Formally Visitation is the only tool available which satisfactorily combines external scrutiny with proper accountability. Preparations for the Visitation were made in a number of ways including a paper on the Cathedral's finances by Jonathan Swan. As part of the Visitation +Graeme also commissioned a further report on Cathedral Music.

As Bishop Stephen notes in his letter (attached) "There are very few surprises in this report. This is good. It means a capacity for self-assessment and a culture of healthy realism about our strengths and weaknesses is already taking root. Some of the recommendations are already work in progress."

THE REPORT

In response to +Stephen's brief the Visitation Team reported as follows:

1 GOVERNANCE

- 1.1 **The Council:** the Visitation Team was encouraged by the way in which the Council was seeking to define its role and to refresh its membership.
- 1.2 **College of Canons:** the Visitation Team recognised the need to renew the offer to the College of Canons and develop an understanding of its role.
- 1.3 **Chapter:** the Visitation Team recognised that significant progress had been made in matters of financial transparency, lay membership of Chapter and the place of the cathedral in the diocese.
- 1.4 **The Strategic Plan:** the Visitation Team recommended that the Chapter considers ways in which all those involved in the life of the cathedral, whether employed or volunteers, are helped to own and implement the main themes of the Strategic Plan.
- 1.5 **The Finance Committee:** the Visitation Team noted that the function of this body is advisory. The team, in talking with the chair, committee members and the Treasurer, was not clear that the existing committee understood this advisory remit thoroughly.
- 1.6 **The Works Committee:** the Visitation Team noted the exemplary way in which this committee functions.
- 1.7 **The Choral Foundation:** the Visitation Team made a range of technical recommendations for Chapter.
- 1.8 **The Residentiary Canons:** the Visitation Team noted that there are two Commissioners Canons (the Precentor and the Canon Pastor) "engaged exclusively on cathedral duties" and one Diocesan Canon (the Canon Theologian), who is funded jointly by the cathedral and the diocese. The team noted that at present there are no role descriptions for the residentiary canons, and no form of ministerial review.
- 1.9 **The Lay Members of Chapter:** the Visitation Team noted that the lay members of Chapter felt themselves to be of equal standing with the clerical members when around the Chapter table.

2 STAFFING

The team was impressed by the dedication and commitment of all the staff and volunteers they encountered. The team had a general concern about capacity when it came to the ongoing life, work and mission of the cathedral.

3 CATHEDRAL FOR THE DIOCESE

The team noted that many of those interviewed during the Visitation spoke warmly about a change of attitude between the cathedral and the diocese. In order to reflect the diversity of the Diocese, the team recommended that the Cathedral develop greater diversity in those leading worship.

4 CIVIC CHURCH

The Visitation Team noted the positive comments they heard on relationships with the City and County and gave encouragement to developing links with the east London boroughs.

5 MEDIA

The Visitation Team gave general encouragement to build on current strengths and develop existing work.

6 CATECHESIS AND PROCLAMATION

The Visitation Team made general comments about learning opportunities in the cathedral with one specific recommendation that the Chapter creates a learning programme aimed both at the regular congregation but particular at those seeking to explore the Christian faith for the first time.

7 ADDITIONAL AREAS

a) Worship: the Visitation Team made the following recommendations:

- That the Chapter ensures that the said Offices are given the dignity of time and speed enabling an atmosphere of unhurried calm.
- That the Chapter and music department consider ways in which the cathedral, as a centre of musical excellence, might enrich the 9.30am Eucharist in a way appropriate to the purpose and positioning of this service.
- That the Chapter ensures that whatever other activity is going on in the cathedral, there is always maintained a space for private prayer and solitude.

b) Engagement with the poor and marginalized: the Visitation Team made a positive assessment of the Cathedral's outward facing ministry.

c) The development of the Cathedral building – no specific comments or recommendations.

d) Congregational Development and the roles and responsibilities of volunteers: the Visitation Team made the following recommendations:

- That the Chapter engages in serious debate with the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Chief Executive of the diocese and the local Deanery as to the future of the cathedral's geographical parish.
- That the Chapter in the short term formulates a pastoral plan to service the residents of the cathedral's geographical parish.
- That the Chapter gives serious consideration as to how lay leadership might be developed in the regular worshipping community.
- That together with the Bishop and dean the cathedral community identifies the essential spiritual qualities they desire in all those sharing leadership in order to prioritise the spiritual flourishing within the cathedral's mission.
- That the Chapter reviews the "job description" of the cathedral wardens to separate liturgical function from lay leadership, considering a change of name for the office which better speaks of its function.
- That new cathedral wardens and sidespeople are given relevant induction training, including briefing on the cathedral's Strategic Plan.

e) The Cathedral School: the Visitation Team made various recommendations which are already in place.

30/10/17