

St George's Cathedral Council Interim Report to the Parish

Introduction

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

The past five months have marked the beginning of our service as Churchwardens and members of the Cathedral Council—a period shaped by both responsibility and grace. We have sought to ground our work in prayer, stewardship, and a shared commitment to the life and witness of our cathedral.

Taking office, we were mindful of the trust placed in us: to care for the spiritual, communal, and practical life of this sacred place. Our focus has been on strengthening the foundations entrusted to us—supporting worship, enhancing governance, maintaining our facilities, and nurturing our role within the broader community.

This report reflects on the journey thus far: the challenges we have encountered, the progress we have made, and the lessons we continue to learn. Above all, it is a testament to the faithfulness of this community—clergy, staff, volunteers, and congregation—whose dedication sustains and enriches the life of the cathedral.

We look back on these past few months with gratitude for what has been established, and with hope for what God continues to build among us.

The Council has focused on strengthening governance, improving financial oversight, addressing critical property and maintenance needs, supporting staff and clergy, and laying the foundations for the long-term sustainability and mission of St George's Cathedral. Through a combination of strategic reflection and practical action, Council has begun implementing systems and structures that will serve the Cathedral well into the future.

1. Governance and Leadership

One of the Council's early priorities was to establish a clear governance framework and define areas of responsibility for councillors. Portfolios were allocated covering finance, property, maintenance, communications, stewardship, pastoral care, hospitality, staff wellbeing and Project R, creating greater accountability and enabling focused oversight.

Council also introduced authorised spending limits and committed to strengthening governance processes, financial reporting and accountability mechanisms. Financial reports are now distributed in advance of meetings to support informed decision-making. The appointment of a Financial Advisor and Strategist, Chris Sickle, has significantly enhanced Council's ability to plan for the future. His expertise has enabled a shift from largely operational budgeting to strategic financial planning, with a stronger focus on long-term sustainability, priority-setting, financial forecasting, and the

alignment of resources with the Cathedral's mission and strategic objectives. This work is helping to create a more disciplined and sustainable financial framework for the Cathedral's future.

During June, Council further recognised the need for enhanced oversight structures to guide major commercial, property and partnership decisions and began considering a formal governance review mechanism.

2. Strategic Planning and Future Direction

A significant milestone was the Council Strategic Planning Workshop, which provided an opportunity for reflection on the Cathedral's future direction and the effectiveness of Council's work. The workshop highlighted the need for a clear long-term vision, stronger alignment between portfolios, improved governance structures, and a three- to five-year strategic plan.

Key outcomes of the workshop included agreement on the need to:

- Develop a clear strategic plan before budgeting.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations.
- Improve collaboration across portfolios.
- Strengthen financial sustainability.
- Enhance governance and accountability.
- Ensure continuity between successive councils.

The workshop also affirmed that the Cathedral is served by a committed and capable Council with the skills and experience required to meet future challenges.

3. Financial Stewardship and Accountability

Council has made notable progress in strengthening financial governance and management.

Key initiatives include:

- Implementing a new offertory counting and verification process, now operating successfully with councillor participation.
- Improving tracking systems for expenditure, maintenance costs, contractor work and approvals.
- Beginning the development of procurement guidelines and structured payment processes.
- Improving transparency by allocating municipal costs across individual properties.

Income has been supported through increased pledges, strong Welcome Table performance, film-shoot income and a bequest to the Cathedral.

Council has also remained committed to addressing historic financial liabilities, including municipal account obligations, while maintaining payment arrangements and securing additional resources where possible. This is no mean feat.

4. Property and Asset Management

The Cathedral's extensive property portfolio requires ongoing attention and investment. During the reporting period, Council undertook significant work to better understand the condition and future maintenance needs of Cathedral properties.

Achievements include:

- Comprehensive inspections of Cathedral properties and clergy houses. There remains lots of maintenance to be done at both these properties.
- Development of plans for formal structural assessments of the clergy residences.
- Progress toward establishing an asset management policy and a comprehensive asset register.
- Identification of future maintenance priorities across the precinct.

Council also undertook a precinct-wide review to better understand long-term maintenance requirements and future budget implications.

5. Church House Renovation Project and the Crypt

A major achievement during the reporting period has been the refurbishment of the Church House apartment.

Work completed includes:

- Plumbing upgrades.
- Electrical installations.
- Built-in cupboards throughout the apartment.
- Painting and finishing work.
- Air-conditioning installation.
- General refurbishment and enhancement of the space.

These improvements have enabled the Cathedral to bring a valuable asset back into productive use. As a result, Council successfully concluded a lease agreement with St Cyprian's School, effective 1 July 2026, generating rental income of R30,000 per month. The student teachers in the accommodation would have to commute +- 35km on a daily basis so living close by takes away the strain of travel.

The Crypt – Keep a lookout for the big reveal! The new proprietor and her team are busy getting things ready but more on this in the weeks to come!

6. Project R and Cathedral Infrastructure

Project R has continued to develop as the Cathedral's principal restoration and fundraising initiative.

Council has:

- Confirmed ongoing support for Project R.
- Identified the Cathedral roof as a critical priority.
- Begun planning for future restoration phases.

In addition, repairs were undertaken to stained-glass windows, and assessments commenced to address broader conservation requirements across the Cathedral precinct of all the stained glass windows.

7. Staff and Human Resource Development

Recognising the importance of staff wellbeing, Council has begun strengthening human resource management processes.

Progress includes:

- Establishing HR oversight responsibilities.
- Reviewing employment practices against diocesan guidelines.
- Beginning work on updated contracts and HR policies.
- Exploring fair and sustainable remuneration structures.
- Approving a staff appreciation gratuity in recognition of exceptional service.

8. Worship, Mission and Community Engagement

Throughout the reporting period, the Cathedral continued to fulfil its mission through worship, outreach and community engagement.

Highlights include:

- Strong attendance at Holy Week and Easter services.
- Continued popularity of the Easter Orchestral Mass.
- Successful ecumenical Ascension Day celebrations with Groote Kerk and Central Methodist Church.
- Ongoing development of the Welcome Table ministry.
- Continued support for justice, peace and reconciliation initiatives.

Council also supported the Human Rights and Peace Pilgrimage to Robben Island, which brought together approximately 100 participants, including 50 young people from across the Diocese.

Additional clergy appointments were made to strengthen ministries focused on justice, peace, pastoral care and community outreach. In May, Rev Annie Kirke joined the staff and has the portfolio of Peace and Justice. On 9 August we will formally welcome Reverends Jonathan Londt, Jaques Pretorius and Phillip Donald to the cathedral staff.

9. Tourism and Income Generation

Recognising the need to diversify income streams, Council is considering a structured tourism proposal aimed at enhancing the visitor experience while generating sustainable income.

The proposal includes:

- Accredited Cathedral tour guides.
- Improved visitor management.
- Digital donation platforms.
- Youth employment opportunities.
- Enhanced interpretation of the Cathedral's history and significance.

Council responded positively to the proposal and agreed that further development should continue through Exco.

10. Risk Management and Security

Council has also taken steps to improve risk management and security across the Cathedral precinct.

Achievements include:

- Processing insurance claims related to geyser failures and storm damage and a burglary at the cathedral where the stained glass window was broken.
- Responding to burglary incidents at the Deanery and pursuing insurance recovery.
- Reviewing security systems and identifying opportunities for improved access control and surveillance.
- Initiating a review of insurance cover and asset valuations.

11. St Bartholomew's Walmer Estate

Beginning in August 2026, St George's Cathedral take the Parish of St Bartholomew's, Walmer Estate under its wing, helping to nurture and renew this much-loved but struggling parish. Together, we hope to build on its proud history, encourage growth in worship and fellowship, and deepen its service to the community.

We invite the Cathedral family to support this exciting new journey through prayer, encouragement and involvement where possible.

"See, I am doing a new thing!" (Isaiah 43:19)

This development comes with the blessing of the Archbishop as well as Bishop Joshua, and forms part of our commitment to strengthening Anglican witness and ministry in our city.

12. Upcoming events:

- Robert and Sophie Grey Celebrations on 4 September 2026.
- Golf Day – 12 November 2026
- The crypt turns 120 on 13 November 2026.

Conclusion

The first months of this Council's term have been characterised by purposeful action, honest reflection and a commitment to strengthening the foundations of St George's Cathedral.

Significant progress has been made in improving governance, establishing stronger financial controls, addressing maintenance and property priorities, supporting staff and clergy, advancing Project R, growing income-generation opportunities, and initiating a strategic planning process that will guide future decision-making.

While many challenges remain, Council has demonstrated a willingness to engage constructively with complex issues and has laid important groundwork for the Cathedral's future sustainability, mission and ministry.