

The Church of England's General Synod has welcomed new measures to strengthen governance and operational frameworks for England's cathedrals.

Recommendations made in a report by the Cathedrals Working Group, set up in response to the visitation of Peterborough Cathedral, were approved by the Synod in York today.

The report notes recent failures of governance and management within a small number of cathedrals which, though by no means widespread, highlighted vulnerabilities across the sector.

In response, it makes a series of recommendations intended to diminish risk and to sustain the vital role cathedrals play in communities across the country.

It recommends retaining the chapter as the governing body of a cathedral, but with changes to its composition to achieve a majority of non-executive members. Cathedrals will also establish separate senior executive teams to oversee day-to-day operations.

Extensive consultation on the report took place earlier in 2018, with responses from members of cathedrals, the wider church, Government and the Charity Commission.

The report calls for a dialogue with Government towards the establishment of a significant cathedral fabric fund for the UK. It also recommends that Cathedrals come under Charity Commission regulation, ensuring they are in line with best practice elsewhere in the third sector. Cathedral Councils would also be abolished.

Meanwhile, a Cathedrals Support Group to support the implementation of the recommendations will be set up, chaired by the Third Church Estates Commissioner, Eve Poole.

Overall, a third of the changes are legislative, with changes to the Cathedrals Measure (1999) to be brought to Synod in July 2019.

Introducing the motion, the Bishop of Bristol, Viv Faull, Vice Chair of the Cathedrals Working Group said that the report had been “the product of an extensive listening process.”

She said: “We were acutely aware of the Howe Commission in the mid-1990s, and it is notable that their recommendations still read today as relevant. These were not fully implemented, so our hope is that the recommendations of this new report will be taken as a whole, avoiding cherry picking.”

She added: “Cathedrals carry symbolic and spiritual weight far beyond the immediate community of their clergy and congregation.”

The Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge, the Church of England’s lead bishop on cathedrals, brought the motion, saying: “This report covers a range of practical matters which are essential to get right in order to enable the prayer, service and outreach which will allow these buildings to

flourish, and to continue to be a spiritual and physical presence in our communities.”

Dr Poole said: “I’m delighted to welcome this historic report, and the challenge of overseeing its implementation.

“I will be keeping in close contact with Deans, the Association of English Cathedrals and the Cathedrals Administration and Finance Association, and each of our workstreams will have either a sponsoring Dean or other appropriate member of the cathedral community, so that we can track progress and ensure good communication.”

Notes for editors

[The report can be downloaded here.](#) The motion was passed in the following terms:

That this Synod:

- a. *welcome the recommendations in the Report of the Cathedrals Working Group (GS 2101A);*
- b. *request the Archbishops' Council to bring forward a draft measure for First Consideration at the July 2019 group of sessions to give effect to the recommendations that involve legislative change; and*
- c. *call on all concerned, including bishops, cathedrals and the National Church Institutions, to give effect to the recommendations that do not involve legislative change as soon as practically possible.*

England's Cathedrals in numbers:

- 42 Church of England Cathedrals across England
- Generate £220million for the national economy
- Employ 7,380 people
- 11.3 million adults go to a cathedral annually (27% of the UK population)
- 320,000 school children visit each year
- 14,760 volunteers, giving 1.96 million hours a year, a rise of 15% between 2006 and 2016.
- 78% of people living in a city with a cathedral felt it was at the heart of their city
- 59% of people nationally consider that cathedrals belong to the whole community not just the Church of England
- 37,000 people per week attended cathedral services in 2016
- 53,000 attended Easter and 131,000 attended Christmas cathedral services in 2016

Sources:

The economic and social impacts of England's cathedrals, Ecorys, 2014

Spiritual Capital: The Present and Future of English Cathedrals, Theos and The Grubb Institute, 2012

Church of England Statistics for Mission, 2016.

