

Commercial Director's Report July 2025

Aim

To update the Trustee Board on Commercial activity at St Raphael's Hospice.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Trustees note the activity and developments since the last meeting.

RETAIL

We have had quite a bit of sickness over the last couple of months and together with annual leave we have had to work very hard to keep all shops open. The team have been brilliant moving with little or no notice and forgoing their double up days ensuring there is paid staff cover for all shops.

We said goodbye to the Assistant Manager at Rosehill who retired after 5 years. She was the Manager but when her eyesight deteriorated, she stepped back to Assistant Manager. We haven't really said goodbye as she is staying with us as a volunteer and is still an integral part of the team. She has been an inspiration to work with performing at a high level even after she was registered blind. She has taken the shop from strength to strength and created one of the most loyal and dedicated teams of volunteers we have anywhere in retail. She leaves the shop in an excellent place 10% above last year and 6% above budget.

After a tricky couple of months performance has picked up and as of week 27 we are back on budget with peak season just beginning. We are looking at underperformers for some focused attention and started with Raynes Park. Over the last couple of weeks, we have started to see this pay off with the shop going over their weekly budget. We are now focusing on Sutton and Stonecot.

Overall Gift Aid performance hasn't changed but there are some shining stars amongst the team with impressive weekly conversion rates:

Banstead 45%, Carshalton 31%, Cheam 27%, Raynes Park 25% and Wimbledon Village 38%
In November we are holding two days of Gift aid training with The Charity Retail Consultancy. Each day can accommodate 25 people and by doing it over two days we don't have to close shops. We will also aim to fill the remaining places with key volunteers. The training is based around mystery shopping of all our sites. There are a lot of barriers to maximising GA, training, fear of asking about tax, not understanding it, infrastructure and volumes of donations and customers. This training will help the team with all of these problems.

Elys pop-up shop for Christmas – Kate has built a fundraising relationship with Elys. She proposed that they could support us by offering us some space for a pop-up shop this Christmas which they have agreed. At the time of writing this report I have no more detail despite having chased the contact a number of times. All we know is that it will be on the second floor at Christmas. We don't know about size, how long we can be there, what product they will allow us to sell. Can we staff with volunteers? Security and cash handling; Are there fixtures and fittings? Can we use their WIFI for our till, do we have to operate the same opening hours as them etc.

Maintenance

Over the last few weeks, we have had emergency lighting installed in three of our shops and are undertaking work to upgrade our lighting to LED. Five shops are also undergoing renewal of their EICR certificates, which have recently expired.

Wimbledon Park

I have chased this up as we are so close to completion. The new tenants came back last week asking for an asbestos report and service records for the aircon which have both been sent over.

Retail Pay

HR highlighted that we had some staff barely on the minimum wage and that Retail Assistants and Assistant Managers were paid the same when the roles have quite different levels of responsibility. HR have done a lot of work to benchmark all retail roles, and we met with Nick & Becca to talk it through. We have come up with a recognisable difference for each role with an impact to our budget of £30,000. We have made some suggestions of how we can mitigate this in the budget and look to rolling out new JD's and pay in the next month.

New Stores

We have been looking for new sites and had a near miss in Wallington. But we have been very lucky, our specialist volunteer has found a store in what we are calling Wimbledon Central.

The address is:
Sterling House
6-10 St George Road
Wimbledon
SW19 4DP

Location

The property is located diagonally opposite Wimbledon's mainline rail, tube and tram stations. The store is on the crossroads between the side entrance to Elys and the Nat West Bank. On the opposite corner is a two-storey Starbucks. There is no retail beyond the site in St Georges Road. Sterling House is a five-floor office space that has just been leased to Regus who provide flexible workspaces through Coworking, Virtual Offices and Meeting rooms. Tenants can be members or one off's requiring an office space for a day or more.

The store was previously a Chinese supermarket which went into administration after 18 months and before that a chemist which downsized to a property just over the road. Before the chemist it was a hair and beauty salon who relocated to within Elys.

Landlord

The landlord is represented by Lewis & Co and prioritising a secure reliable tenant. We know that all three viewings, of which we were the first, have made an offer. Obviously, there is no commitment until Heads of Terms are exchanged and we can pull out at any point, but we wanted to be able to share this rare opportunity with Trustees.

Lease

The lease is 10 years with a five-year rent review and break clause.

The store comprises 2,931 SQ FT of ground floor accommodation. The space is completely open with one small area walled off, making a windowless kitchen. The toilet/bathroom has been removed but all the plumbing is still there meaning it will be easy to reinstate. The lighting and flooring are in good condition and with a few additions would suit our style of store.

- We would envisage this being a High Street store with an element of Boutique.
- The store would trade 7 days either 10am-6pm or 11am-7pm (11am-5pm on Sundays)
- Staffing would be a third Lead Manager*, full time Assistant Manager and at least 1 Sunday Assistant Manager (possibly 2 to start when we would still be recruiting volunteers). * We

used to have 3 Lead Managers until last year when the one covering High Street stores resigned. Having a third one would give our team some more support and resilience.

- Although the store has no rear access and is on a double yellow line, deliveries can be made kerbside, at any time, except 8.30-9.30am and 5-6pm
- We estimate that the store would take £4,800 a week or more this equates to £250,000 per annum

Costs

The rent is £90,000 per annum which we have tried to negotiate but there are two other offers on the table for at least the asking price. To give you some context Wimbledon Village has just had a rent review and will be £65,000, The Donation Centre is £50,000 and Morden is £27,500.

The ratable value is £83,500 meaning that the annual bill would be £42,752 of which charities receive an 80% mandatory reduction therefore £8,550 per annum.

We have met with our shop fitters who have created a draft budget which they forecast to be £54,319 excluding VAT.

Footfall

At the time of writing this report we have not been able to do a footfall count. Although it's open to debate as to whether that would provide any useful information as there is nothing much to draw people beyond us other than the side entrance to Elys. The store is very large and visible from the station and walking from central Wimbledon towards Starbucks. We feel confident that with great signage, marketing and visibility this store would draw people to it. Also, all the tenants that will be in the offices above, will provide additional foot fall.

In conclusion:

- We don't think it can be stressed how rare this opportunity is for Wimbledon
- The property is a good size and condition which makes fit out costs reasonable
- We will not find anything that is more affordable, in a more central location, in Wimbledon i.e. close to the Trinity Hospice shop, and if we did it would cost more
- It is difficult to be accurate about footfall, but it is ideally located between a bank & Elys
- Rent is £90,000 per year
- Income estimated at £4,800 per week, £250,000 per annum
- Charities are good tenants, which is what the Landlord is looking for

PCI-DSS and Gift Aid Training

We are just finalising the last few stragglers with volunteers undertaking GA compliance and PCI-DSS training. This has been a painful experience partly due to the training having to be undertaken on paper and the challenge of tracking every piece of paper back to the office.

CRA (Charity Retail Association) Rag Project

We are taking part in a pilot scheme with the CRA around RAG. Rag merchants across the country will not take soiled, stained or ripped items anymore, which means we have to put them in our waste. This is not only costly but very un-environmental. A consultant has visited three shops the Donation Centre, Cheam & Morden and trained the staff about the different levels of rag and how to split for Re-use & Recycling. She will come back for the next three weeks to check that the team have got it right. She has an outlet for the Recycling and will convince the rag merchant to take it from us for free. It is a very interesting project to be a part of and will not only save money but is also teaching us a lot about our stock and how we might be able to make better use of it. The results of this project could positively impact every charity shop in the country.

eBay & Events

We have had a very good response to our Resellers Bundles on eBay. We pack up 8KG of mixed ladies wear (from the rag) and sell them on eBay for £16 plus £7.99 postage. This means we sell our rag for £2 a kilo when we would get 13p a kilo from the rag man. Its not quite as simple as it sounds but we have sold out. We are now focusing on getting a pile of bags made so we can just leave the post up on eBay. The feedback from purchasers has been excellent.

We held our first evening preview at Wimbledon Village on Friday 26th September previewing our Winter season stock. We sold/gave away 200 tickets and half an hour before opening there was a queue. We took £2,500 in two hours on the Friday evening and then another £6,000 in the next three days. The team worked very hard to prepare and were well supported by their volunteers.

Our first Wedding Fair was a great success raising £3,600 and we had excellent feedback from attendees, volunteers and staff who took part in the fashion shows. It was a lot of hard work and planning, but we felt that was more about the fact that we hadn't done it before. We held a washup meeting with our volunteers and plan to do the next one over a whole weekend in March 2026.

Clearance sales continue to go well, and we are looking at doing an extra one perhaps with just children's wear.

We attended Summer Sessions, a music festival, in memory of one of our patients. We made about £600 but it is excellent visibility, and the charity is the beneficiary of the fundraising.

We have brought a pop up till which means that we are able to capture the GA at our clearance sales more easily and saves us a lot of time. It also feeds into our figures and means we don't have to do any back-office adjustments. It will work via WIFI and therefore only needs a power supply which means it can go to all our events and any pop-up shops we manage to get.

DATIX

During the last two months we have had the following incidents in shops:

- Lady came back to the Carshalton Shop demanding a refund for a jacket she had apparently purchased the Friday before. She didn't have the receipt. The manager looked back and couldn't find a sale for £9.50 on that day and she had also been working then and didn't recognise the lady or the jacket. The lady became very unpleasant. We think that she might have brought the jacket from Cancer Research a few doors up.
- Thames water attended Morden to change the meter and in pre-testing found there was a mild electrical current going through the kitchen sink and pipe work. Our electrician attended site and eventually discovered that the building is not earthed properly. He reported it as an emergency to UK Power Networks but said that there is no threat to staff and the shop could remain open. UK Power Networks have attended and didn't make the repair we are now waiting for them to come back again.
- We noticed some damage to the van following a weekend event. When we looked back on our CCTV we could see that our new volunteer had lightly scrapped it down the wall in the car park and hadn't realised.
- One of our bank staff asked to move shops for a couple of days as she had received some unwanted attention from a customer. She knew that he would be returning to Mauritius in the next week so just wanted to avoid him. We put in a second person to be with her for a day or so just to be on the safe side.

LOTTERY

I have handed over the Lottery to Kate except for the licencing and regulatory returns which I continue to support. In the next few months, we will apply for Kate and Lucy to have an annex A and once that is granted, I can hand that over as well.

RETAIL VOLUNTEERING

Retail Recruitment

Month	New Starters 2025	Leavers 2025	Actual Hours 2025	Actual Hours 2024	Variance	Variance %
January	13	12	4,084	3,641	443	+11%
February	10	0	3,595	3,211	384	+11%
March	11	5	3,593	3,155	438	+12%
April	4	7	3,386	3,265	121	+ 4%
May	7	5	4,020	3,885	135	+3%
June	6	19	3,392	3,449	-57	-2%
July	17	15	3,561	3,340	221	+6%
August	6	10	4,162	3,778	384	+9%
September	9	6	tbc	3,636	tbc	tbc
Total to date	83	79	tbc	31,360	tbc	tbc

Recruitment Campaign

We've received a high volume of enquiries rather than applications. While we've responded to all of them, many have not replied. To streamline the process and save time, we've updated the link, so it now directs people straight to the application form.

Our existing social media campaign will continue to run and focus on retail until the end of January 2026.

Update information forms

We've had a good response to the update-details forms sent out in June to all retail volunteers. We're currently reviewing all returned forms against the information held on Raiser's Edge and making updates where appropriate.

Retail Training

Supporting the Retail Team with the implementation of Gift Aid and PCI DSS training for all shop retail volunteers over the past month. Gift Aid implementation has been completed, and PCI DSS training is scheduled for completion by the end of September.

Annual Thank you and Long Service Awards Event

This year's Event will be held at St Bedes on the Monday 24th November from 6pm – 8pm and Tuesday 25th November from 2pm – 4pm.

All Volunteers across the organisation are invited. Invitation will be sent out on 6th October, and we anticipate 150-200 will attend.

Lorraine Hunt