

St Raphael's Hospice
Minutes of a Meeting of the Income Generation & Communications Committee
Held at St Raphael's, London Road, Cheam, Sutton, SM3 9DX with video call
access.

At 11am on Tuesday 20th January 2026

Members: Grahame Darnell (GD – Committee Chair & Trustee)
 Alan Cogbill (AC – Trustee)
 Sr Veronica Hagen (VH – Trustee)
 Bernard Marley (BM – Trustee)

In attendance: Rebecca Trower (RT – Joint CEO)
 Nick Stevens (NS – Joint CEO)
 Sara Jane Harris (SJH – Commercial Director)
 John Groom (JG - Director of IT & Estates – covering Fundraising and Communications)
 Karen Monaghan (KM – Governance)

Actions arising

Agenda item	Action	Responsible	Timeline	Ref.
4.	Provide a compliance review of lottery activity at the next meeting.	JG/Interim Fundraising Director	05.05.26	20.01.26/01
	Ensure future reports present headline figures and trend data first.	JG/Interim Fundraising Director	05.05.26	20.01.26/02
11.	Present the updated Departmental Risk Register to the next meeting	BM/SJH	05.05.26	20.01.26/03

1. Welcome, apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

The Chair welcomed Committee members to the meeting. No apologies for absence were received. The Chair declared that any support he had provided in relation to the recruitment of an interim Fundraising Director had been given on a voluntary basis and without charge. The Committee noted this declaration and recorded its thanks.

2. Review of minutes of 14th October 2025 Committee meeting

The Committee reviewed the draft minutes. A small number of drafting changes were noted, including clarification of references within the clinical workforce section. Subject to these non-substantive amendments, the Committee approved the minutes, with authority delegated to Governance to issue a revised final version.

3. Actions List and update on matters arising.

The Committee reviewed the actions log and confirmed that most actions had either been completed or were covered within the current agenda. It was noted that:

- Brand feedback from stakeholder surveys has been incorporated into current reporting.

- Lottery progress had been addressed within the Fundraising update paper.
- The harmonisation and presentation of the departmental risk register had been delayed but was now scheduled for completion and presentation at the next meeting.

The Chair emphasised the importance of closing out the risk register work, noting that the remaining issues related primarily to presentation and consistency, rather than underlying risk content.

4. Fundraising Report

4.1. Fundraising update - The Committee received a comprehensive update on fundraising performance and activity. Year-to-date income was reported as broadly on track against target, with confidence expressed that the overall annual target remained achievable. Trustees welcomed the positive trajectory when compared to prior years, noting the strength of the underlying trend once exceptional or guaranteed income was stripped out of previous comparators. Assurance was taken from:

- Strong performance across seasonal appeals and events, including Lower Morden Lane Lights, Santa Dash, and community-led initiatives.
- Evidence of year-on-year growth in community income.
- Clear enthusiasm, creativity, and momentum within the fundraising team.

The Committee discussed at length the early success of a telemarketing pilot for lottery re-engagement and upgrades. The model, which charges only £16 per successful conversion, was considered highly cost-effective compared to traditional acquisition routes. Members encouraged further exploration of this channel, including its potential application to regular giving, while noting the need for robust compliance assurance before scaling.

The Committee also discussed the importance of volunteer capacity as a limiting factor for some fundraising activities (and also a challenge for retail), particularly during peak seasonal periods. Trustees stressed the importance of aligning communications activity with volunteer recruitment to maximise income potential.

From a governance perspective, the Committee requested that future reports present headline figures and comparative charts at the front of the report, followed by narrative analysis. It was noted that reports will continue to strengthen the use of visual trend data, which is now easily drawn from the CRM, to support assurance and oversight.

JG/Interim Fundraising Director to ensure future reports present headline figures and trend data first.

4.2. Communications Report: The Committee received an update on the Communications function following recent staffing changes. It was noted that the departure of the former Head of Communications was a significant loss while acknowledging the opportunity it created for internal progression. The appointment of an interim senior communications adviser to support the new interim lead provides experience, mentoring, and continuity. There are plans to strengthen capacity through temporary backfill and the appointment of an in-house graphic designer, which is expected to be cost-neutral and improve responsiveness.

The Committee welcomed the focus on outcome-driven communications, particularly the increased emphasis on volunteer stories, audience targeting, and channel selection. Trustees stressed the importance of aligning messaging to the demographics most likely to volunteer or donate and avoid over-reliance on channels that do not reach these audiences effectively. The Committee also discussed reputational risk, noting the need to carefully balance positive messaging with transparency about financial pressures, particularly considering visible capital works at the hospice site.

4.3. HR & Staffing: The Committee noted progress in recruiting an interim Fundraising Director for a six-month period; interviews being scheduled for the following week with a view to starting in mid-February. The good field of candidates was noted and the emphasis on the importance of finding someone with the right fit was strongly supported by the committee.

The Trustees welcomed the proactive approach taken to ensure leadership capacity and continuity during a critical period. Workforce resilience and well-being were discussed, with attention paid to the high levels of commitment and energy within teams.

All recognised the need to monitor burnout risk, particularly during extended periods of peak activity. The new appointment should offer leadership and support structures in sustaining performance.

Action: JG/Interim Fundraising Director to provide a compliance review of lottery activity at the next meeting.

5. Commercial Report

5.1 Current performance and operating position: The Commercial Director reported that retail performance remained broadly on budget at quarter end, although income was currently tracking approximately 1% below forecast. The Committee noted that this position had been achieved despite significant operational pressure, including unavoidable temporary shop closures over the preceding six to eight weeks due to staffing constraints. Members were assured that, when averaged across the estate, the financial impact of these closures remained within tolerance and did not materially undermine the year-to-date position.

However, the Committee acknowledged that the current position had been achieved through sustained cost-containment and operational flexibility, with the retail function now operating at what was described as “bare-bones” capacity. Trustees recognised that this constrained the scope for further efficiency savings without affecting service quality or income generation.

5.2 Sector context and structural pressures: The Committee noted sector intelligence shared by the Charity Retail Association, which demonstrated that retail performance pressures were systemic rather than organisation specific. Members discussed the post-COVID peak in 2022/23 followed by subdued growth (2–3%) rather than the higher increases many charities had budgeted for. Ongoing inflationary pressures, including staffing costs, National Insurance, utilities, rent, and business overheads contributed to rising overheads. In addition, a significant and ongoing reduction in volunteer numbers across the sector meant that current levels are materially below pre-pandemic norms. The Committee took assurance that St Raphael’s retail performance broadly mirrored national trends but emphasised the importance of distinguishing structural sector decline from issues within local management control.

5.3 Rag market and waste management: Members noted that the rag market had stabilised at approximately 13p per kilo, which was materially better than the previously anticipated risk of nil return. The Committee welcomed participation in an ongoing pilot that avoided textile waste disposal costs, recognising the environmental and financial benefits.

The Committee also discussed the ongoing and unresolved fly-tipping challenge, particularly at donation centres. It was noted that fly-tipped waste is legally household waste and therefore the responsibility of local authorities. In practice, St Raphael’s continues to incur direct costs and reputational harm where waste is deposited adjacent to hospice retail premises, despite existing deterrents, including signage and CCTV and lack of enforcement action. It was noted that the CRA is campaigning for Local Authorities to take more action on fly tipping.

5.4 Learning from sector best practice: The Committee received insights from recent engagement with Royal Trinity Hospice and its retail leadership. Trustees welcomed this benchmarking exercise and discussed the relevance of several themes to St Raphael’s context, including the strategic benefits of larger format stores and consolidation, balanced against local rental market constraints. The role of area management structures, training, and non-lone working in driving customer service, stock density, and Gift Aid capture were identified as key areas for improvement. Also considered was the importance of consistent customer feedback mechanisms to inform retail strategies, and a deliberate focus on sustainable fashion positioning, disciplined pricing, and simplified product ranges. The Committee acknowledged that some aspects of this model were not immediately transferable due to estate size, rental costs, and capital constraints, but agreed that some of the learning was valuable in shaping future strategic options.

5.5 Staffing, capability, and resilience: The Committee discussed workforce pressures which include

lone working in some shops, driven by staffing shortages. There is limited capacity for structured training and development due to the need to keep shops open, and the absence of dedicated area management capacity, as lead shop managers must balance operational delivery with informal support to other locations.

Trustees expressed concern that, while the current model was maintaining stability, it limited growth potential and increased operational risk, including theft prevention, inconsistent customer experience, and missed Gift Aid opportunities. The Committee recognised the sensitivity of this position and emphasised the need for a clear strategic decision on whether retail should remain stabilised at current levels or be selectively reinvested to enable modest, sustainable growth.

5.6 Estate condition and capital considerations: The Committee noted several property-related risks and pressures. These included shops operating with outdated signage and tired exteriors, affecting brand perception. Some are in line for imminent replacement requirements for EPOS hardware approaching end of warranty. There are ongoing lease negotiations and dilapidation discussions at a few locations, and others have known infrastructure issues such as utility supply problems requiring responsive management.

5.7 Risk, incidents, and governance: The Committee noted recent retail incidents, including cases of theft, fraud, and abusive behaviour towards staff. These incidents were managed in line with policy, or appropriate disciplinary action was taken where required. Trustees were reassured that safeguarding and staff safety remained priorities.

5.8 Strategic direction and next steps: In conclusion, the Committee agreed that the current retail strategy had reached the end of its effective lifecycle, and future growth would not occur without targeted investment and structural change. SJH will continue to develop both a “minimum viable” model and an aspirational future model for retail, to inform budget and strategic discussions. More analysis on what drives shop profitability was encouraged so that the charity can ensure it maximises net return from the current retail portfolio rather than simply relying on acquiring new shops for growth. The services of an external retail consultancy were being explored, provided it remained proportionate, and outcomes focused.

6. Communications Report

Covered in the Fundraising Report.

7. Income Figures including ICB income.

7.1 Income: NS confirmed that total income year-to-date remained broadly in line with plan, with performance tracking within acceptable tolerance against the approved budget. Trustees noted that reported income figures varied slightly depending on the inclusion and timing of Gift Aid recognition, but that underlying performance remained consistent across reporting views.

The Committee welcomed the continued positive trajectory in voluntary income, particularly when assessed on a like-for-like basis excluding exceptional or guaranteed income received in prior years. It was noted that this provided greater assurance regarding the underlying resilience of the income base, rather than reliance on one-off items. The Committee discussed comparative performance across income streams, noting:

- Fundraising income was modestly ahead of internal expectations at this point in the year.
- Community income showed strong year-on-year growth.
- Event income remained broadly on target, albeit constrained by volunteer capacity.
- Retail income remained under pressure but broadly controlled within budget parameters.

The Committee discussed statutory income, noting that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) funding increased year-on-year but remained a small proportion of total operating costs. Additional funding secured during the year was restricted or time-limited, including pilot arrangements and role-specific funding. There remains a significant structural gap between statutory funding and the true cost of hospice care.

Trustees expressed concern about the risk of public misperception, particularly where visible capital investment could create an impression of financial security. The Committee emphasised the importance of clearly explaining the distinction between restricted capital funding, time-limited pilot funding, and core unrestricted income required to sustain services.

7.2 Expenditure control and cost pressures: The Committee noted that expenditure remained tightly controlled, with management continuing to exercise restraint across discretionary spending. It was recognised that many of the pressures on expenditure were structural and external, rather than within the organisation’s direct control.

8. HR & Staffing

Covered in previous reports.

9. Fundraising Strategy – high-level priorities

The Committee discussed early thinking on strategic priorities for 2026/27. Trustees supported the “blue-sky” session with the fundraising team to identify innovation opportunities, while ensuring that activity remained aligned to organisational capacity and risk appetite.

10. Standing item - ICB income; NHS consultation

Covered in Item 7.

11. Departmental risk register

The Committee noted that further work was underway to align scoring and presentation across the risk register. It was agreed that an updated version would be brought to the next meeting for review and assurance.

Action: BM to contribute to the presentation of the updated Departmental Risk Register to the next meeting.

12. Retail Incident Report (Standing Item)

The Committee noted that no additional incidents requiring escalation had been reported since the last meeting. Where retail incidents had occurred, these had been managed in line with established procedures.

13. Any Other Business and Dates of future meetings

RT highlighted the inclusion of the Evidence of Excellence Register in the meeting papers for all to note, as an action arising from the Clinical Quality & Governance meeting. This will be included in all future Committees as an item of interest.

The date of the next meeting is **Tuesday 5th May 2026.**

The meeting ended at 1.01pm.

Approved..... Date.....