

Survive and Thrive Case Study

Rothwell Arts and Heritage Centre Board Action Plan



Aim: Following a Survive & Thrive diagnostic interview and an initial legal review, it was agreed that the Rothwell Arts and Heritage Centre (RAHC) required governance and business development support as a priority. The following key aims were identified and agreed for RAHC as part of Survive & Thrive:

- *Arts and Business Board Development support: to re-focus and take ownership of the business of the organisation, including future direction as well as clarifying the roles and responsibilities of board members*
- *Business Planning support: to maximise the potential to increase income for RAHC*
- *Legal Support: Ongoing legal support to ensure RAHC's revised Memorandum and Articles are fit for purpose*

Background

Through their participation in the Survive & Thrive programme RAHC underwent a transformation from an underperforming association to a renewed and revitalised organisation. At the start of the programme the organisation was an unincorporated association working to an interim constitution which left some important areas of responsibility unclear. The committee had ceased to meet regularly and there was no clarity about who the committee members were. At board level, the organisation was too heavily dependent on one voluntary member whose dedication sustained the initiative, but was itself something of an obstacle to effective delegation, even had there been others to be delegated to. Furthermore, the RAHC occupied a building owned by Rothwell and Desborough Futures Ltd (R&DF Ltd), the local regeneration company for the area. The lease from R&DF was unsatisfactory and prevented RAHC from making necessary decisions about the building. R&DF Ltd had earlier come to the end of its funding and was more or less dormant. Its sole assets were the building which RAHC occupied and a retained sum of designated funds which were destined for the RAHC. The chair of RAHC was also on the board of the remaining R&DF Ltd.



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Method

Cultivate's Survive & Thrive Associates, Arts & Business (A&B) were engaged to guide RAHC through the significant changes required in the organisation's governance structure. The process began with a session with volunteers, at which the problematic issues to be addressed were evident. A&B's consultant subsequently worked with members of RAHC's board, whose primary involvement was as volunteers, and had not fully engaged as board members.

A&B's consultant facilitated the development of an action plan. The principal tasks, over the short, medium and long term, were:

- Review and allocate board responsibilities and roles
- Evaluate skills and experience needed for the board
- Recruitment plan for new board members
- Induction process for new board members and volunteers
- Volunteering plan for recruitment, job profiles and training
- Instigate regular formal board and volunteer briefing meetings
- Consider incorporation and future charitable status
- Fundraising planning – from private and public sector
- Amendment of constitution to support accreditation
- Review policies for legal compliance
- Develop new financial controls and monitoring systems

In the process of undertaking the tasks outlined above, it was realised that R&DF Ltd had come to the end of its effective life as a regeneration company, and that the only remaining active element with which it was involved was RAHC. Agreement was reached with the existing R&DF Ltd board that the company would in effect become RAHC. Around this radical proposition it became possible to bring together new active board members with relevant skills and fresh commitment, both in respect of the management and governance of the company and its cultural direction.

Evaluation and Outcomes

Following on from recommendations and support provided by the S+T programme, it was decided that unincorporated association which was RAHC would cease, and the revitalised R&DF Ltd would continue, under its new board, changing its name and articles of association to reflect its principal purpose, which is now to own and operate RAHC. As a result RAHC has become a properly constituted company, the outright owner of the building in which it is housed, and in addition owns a significant sum of designated funds for its future development.

Conclusion and Legacy

Conclusion:

The development work carried out at RAHC as part of the Survive and Thrive, has enabled the company directors to take a more modern approach to operating the museum and arts centre. They are currently seeking charitable registration and preparing to become an accredited museum, and are creating a new business plan for the organisation to encompass this work.

Legacy:

Much expertise has come from specialist advisers including Survive & Thrive Associates - Arts & Business and Freeth Cartwright LLP and the county's Museum Development Officer, in support of the vigorous efforts of RAHC's own new board. Continuing support will be needed, but approaching a year on from its first involvement with the Survive and Thrive Programme, RAHC is facing a re-invigorated future.

For further information about our Organisational Development services please contact us.
Email: vanessa@cultivate-em.com Telephone: 0115 852 4006