

US President's Foreword

A word of thanks

My first task is to thank Marc Meyer and all those who have been involved in producing this report. Building upon his stalwart Chairmanship of Hendon United Synagogue, Marc has brought inspirational leadership to this important project. The contribution of Marc and his team, all those who participated in the working groups and all who responded to the community survey has been tremendous. Together, you have provided us with the blueprint for the future of the United Synagogue as we work together to deliver our new guiding policy: *Building Vibrant, Engaged Communities at the Forefront of British Jewry*.

Who we are

Our organisation is based on firm foundations. The United Synagogue strives to include every Jew, bringing 21st century Orthodox Judaism to life in their hearts and minds, by championing:

...an authentic approach. The US is proud to be a centrist Orthodox organisation which operates under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi and his court, the London Beth Din. They, together with the Rabbinate, define our ethos and mark out our boundaries. They are the envy of other communities nationally and worldwide.

...an inclusive approach. The US welcomes every Jew regardless of their level of observance. We do not turn any Jew away. Moreover our Rabbis will help each individual to progress along their own unique Jewish journey. Every Jew matters.

...a modern approach. Our members live in today's world and do not shut themselves off from the outside secular environment. They are confident in their Judaism and want to play their part in modern Britain.

I see a personal reflection of our ethos when I think of my own children - one of whom is extremely observant and one of whom is more traditional. I would like them both to be entirely comfortable belonging to a United Synagogue shul and bringing up their families in a United Synagogue community. They should both be able to find a United Synagogue shul where they are at home. To me, this is who we are - an organisation that embraces all Jews under an Orthodox umbrella.

The review and the actions we will take

When Marc Meyer took on the immense task of this strategic review, it was ten years since Rabbi Saul Zneimer's review, twenty since Sir Stanley (now Lord) Kalms' report, and just months after a new Chief Rabbi had been installed into office. It was a time to reflect on where we were and where we should be going.

Almost a year on, when I received a draft of Marc's report, it was immediately clear to me that his review will have great significance for our community. It represents thousands of hours of work by committed volunteers, hundreds of interviews, and analysis of many thousands of responses to the first ever United Synagogue community-wide survey.

It has some tough messages about the challenges we face but it is clear that The US has the fundamental strength to meet those challenges. We are building on strong foundations and the review recognises that we have rescued the United Synagogue from its financial insecurity of just twenty years ago. Today we benefit from our hard-won financial stability; but stability alone is not enough.

The US is unquestionably valued as a major communal institution. But this does not mean we should stand still.

With only six years until our 150th anniversary, now is the time to look to the future. Now is the time to change. We need to transform communities to become vibrant hubs of Jewish life. In doing so, I firmly believe we will transform UK Jewry.

The review gives us a clear path forwards. In the next six years we will:

...focus on growing our community everywhere in the UK that Jews live, not simply manage its decline in places that Jews used to live. It is not acceptable that the majority of our shuls, Rabbis and assets are in areas of Jewish decline. This must change. We will actively seek out pockets of Jewish growth and build great, vibrant communities that enrich our members' lives.

...transform communities to become vibrant hubs of Jewish life that engage and inspire our members. Apathy and disengagement are by far the biggest adversaries we face. To engage existing members and attract new members, we must do more than build edifices for shul services. In line with the vision set out by Chief Rabbi Mirvis, we must transform our shuls from being solely houses of prayer to places of religious, social and cultural engagement. We will seek to create vibrant community centres that inspire members in every aspect of their Jewish lives – in shul, at home; indeed, wherever they go about their lives. We will prioritise engagement with youth in their communities and with their families.

...ensure our communities are at the heart of everything we do. The review is clear that strong, vibrant communities are the key to our future. It is also clear that the interaction between our central structures and our synagogues is crucial to transforming our communities into vibrant hubs of Jewish life. We will strengthen and refocus that relationship to ensure that our communities are at the heart of everything we do.

...seek to be at the forefront of UK Jewry and will inspire our community with innovative initiatives such as the Chief Rabbi's ShabbatUK. Our members expect The US to lead on issues affecting Orthodox Jews in the UK. The United Synagogue has an enormously powerful voice; working closely with the Chief Rabbi, we will seek to use our reach and relevance to inspire and motivate our members and the wider British Jewish community.

...embrace change throughout the United Synagogue. We must commit to a properly resourced effort to implement the initiatives that the review has drawn together. We will need to be nimble, we will need to take risks and hard decisions and, most importantly, we will need a new mindset throughout every part of our community; one that embraces change, however difficult.

Implementation

A Strategic Review that sits on the shelf serves no purpose. It is only of value if we implement its recommendations. We are fortunate to have recruited a new Chief Executive who will continue the review process and lead the implementation work. As well as developing a structured approach to implementation, he will prioritise communication and engagement on the review

findings with our communities, lay leadership, Rabbis and professional staff, so that we can work in partnership on their implementation. It is this partnership that will enable The US to embrace the changes set out in the report and emerge in a much stronger position to deal with the challenges we face.

Conclusion

I am looking forward to leading an organisation which moves much faster, revolves around its communities, speaks with a powerful voice and responds to the needs of our stakeholders more effectively. If we do that we will be securing the future of The US for the next generation.

I believe The US is in a great place to succeed - more so than it has been for generations. We have a new Chief Rabbi doing amazing work and urging us to be bold and passionate, a new Chief Executive who brings new skills to the organisation, a great Rabbinic and Professional team, a new Trustee Board with women playing a full part and some younger Trustees who represent the next generation and we are in a strong financial position. Now we have a new strategy with a set of recommendations that are the critical building blocks for the future. I am looking forward to the next few years with great anticipation.

Our work will be difficult. It will take time. We will make mistakes. But the reward is nothing less than the community we want our children to inherit.

Stephen Pack

President, United Synagogue

Executive summary

The United Synagogue is an organisation of immense, sometimes untapped and overlooked, strength. It is also facing some immense challenges, in a world that has fundamentally changed from that of ten years ago, let alone the world of nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, when five London synagogues came together to form the United Synagogue.

This strategic review was commissioned by the United Synagogue's President and Trustees. It began with a discussion at a meeting of synagogue chairs in September 2013, the work was carried out over seven months between January and July 2014, and it comes to fruition a year later. It comes ten years after Rabbi Saul Zneimer's review: "Transformation & Action", and twenty years after Sir Stanley Kalms produced "A Time for Change".

The principal finding of this review is that the United Synagogue must indeed change. It must transform its synagogues from being solely houses of prayer to become homes for community. It must build vibrant, engaged communities, at the forefront of British Jewry.

This report is arranged in three broad sections, over seven chapters. It first looks at the strengths of the United Synagogue and the challenges it faces (Chapter 1). It then summarises a strategy for the United Synagogue – to build vibrant, engaged communities at the forefront of British Jewry – and outlines a set of initiatives to deliver the strategy along with two enabling initiatives that cut across all the others (Chapters 2-6). Finally, recognising the importance of implementation to the success of this strategy, it discusses a framework for implementing the strategy (Chapter 7).

The United Synagogue is an organisation of untapped strength facing immense challenges

The United Synagogue's role has changed over time. Written into British law, it was created to enable English Jews to express their Englishness. It is now an organisation that seeks to help British Jews express their Jewishness. The United Synagogue has some fundamental strengths. Some are well known, others latent. It is however, facing immense challenges, at a time when society's relationship with its institutions is changing.

The United Synagogue is a community with intrinsic strength...

The United Synagogue is a community of fundamental strength. It has a broad reach, operates and manages world-class Jewish infrastructure, has a sound asset base and is now financially stable, and has a growing cadre of inspirational rabbis transforming communities. It is important to recognise and build a strategy from these strengths.

A broad reach. With around 40,000 adult members across 63 communities, the United Synagogue is the largest synagogal group in Europe. In the Chief Rabbi's words, including children, The US "represents over 80,000 souls". It is seen as representative of mainstream Orthodox Judaism in the UK and welcomes Jews of all levels of observance. That is a formidable constituency.

World-class Jewish communal infrastructure. The US is in the ‘synagogue business’. It has immense experience and expertise running synagogues and associated services. Its Beth Din, Kashrut Division and Burial Society are seen as distinctive and halachically respected around the world. Burial is one of the top three reasons people join their synagogue.

A sound asset base and financial stability. Twenty years ago, The US faced financial ruin and national newspapers reported accusations of fraud on a massive scale. The actions of successive lay and professional leadership teams have pulled The US back from that abyss, stabilised the community and revived its finances. An asset base totalling nearly a quarter of a billion Pounds is now central to the United Synagogue’s strength.

A growing cadre of great rabbis. Most interviewees agreed that The US has a growing cadre of great rabbis who are transforming once staid communities. One interviewee said, *“Our new rabbi has absolutely transformed the community into a place that is buzzing and engaging”*. Most interviewees agree that rabbis are ‘the key deliverers’ so this strength is important.

...facing immense challenges

Despite its strengths, the community is facing immense challenges in a society whose relationship with its institutions has changed fundamentally. In particular, the United Synagogue is not well positioned to capture pockets of growth and may be overexposed to pockets of decline. Its members no longer join their synagogues simply because that is what’s expected of them – the pew once occupied by three generations of the same family now sits largely empty; members expect a value proposition from their synagogues. It has become clear that the United Synagogue has no clearly defined, shared purpose and most members do not see The US as a leader of the community.

The US is not well positioned to capture pockets of growth and may be overexposed to pockets of decline. The UK Jewish community overall has not changed significantly in size in the last decade. There has however been a net increase in births in the community and the United Synagogue is not well positioned to capture this growth. In some parts of the UK the community has rapidly changed in size but The US has not been quick, flexible or decisive enough to refocus its assets and attention. As a result, The US has roughly double the number of synagogues in declining areas compared to growing areas; nearly 70% of The US’ assets and nearly 60% of its rabbis are in declining areas. Whilst the net effect of im/migration is likely minimal, there may be untapped potential for growth in immigration to the UK. Perhaps most importantly, disaffiliation has had a profound impact on the overall UK Jewish community. Up to 1,000 Jews disaffiliated per year between 2001 and 2011 and analysis suggests the United Synagogue community is highly exposed to this disengagement.

The community’s relationship with its synagogues has changed. No longer do Jews join their synagogue simply because that is what is expected of them. Where once synagogues were houses of prayer, they must now be homes for community. Where once Rabbis were expected simply to preside, now they must lead, inspire and engage their communities.

Members expect a value proposition. US members are looking for vibrant and engaging communities that enrich their Jewish life. They are looking for intellectual and spiritual stimulation; the growth of JW3 and interest in Limmud amongst US members illustrates an increasing appetite for varied offerings. Our synagogues must compete for members’ attention. Synagogues can no longer be simply ‘houses of prayer’. In the words of the Chief Rabbi, they must be a ‘house of social connection’, a home for community.

The United Synagogue has lost its voice. A majority of members say they expect the United Synagogue to lead on issues affecting the community but, despite its size and importance, members do not see The US as a leader of the community.

The United Synagogue has no clearly defined, shared purpose. There is widespread understanding around the community of the United Synagogue's values, namely authentic, inclusive and modern Torah Judaism. But perhaps the starkest finding of this review is that there is no consensus as to the purpose of The US amongst its lay leadership, rabbinic leadership, professional and volunteer staff. There is no consensus over what The US is for. It runs its day-to-day operations but members do not see it as innovative or as a leader in the wider Jewish community.

A strategy for the United Synagogue: to build vibrant, engaged communities at the forefront of British Jewry

Based on extensive interviews, workshops with US leadership, focus groups and analysis of nearly 4,000 survey results the review team articulated a guiding policy for the United Synagogue's strategy:

"Build vibrant and engaged communities at the forefront of British Jewry"

This review did not look at issues of hashkafa or religious ethos but all stakeholders reinforce the importance of maintaining the United Synagogue's values: authentic, inclusive and modern Judaism under the religious guidance of the Chief Rabbi.

This guiding policy can be disaggregated into three foundations of a strategy for the United Synagogue: 'build' communities, make them 'vibrant and engaging', and 'lead' the community.

This remainder of this report outlines a set of initiatives that could underpin each of these foundations and discusses two cross-cutting enablers which emerged throughout the review as essential to support the United Synagogue's strategy: nimbler governance and improved interaction between synagogues and the US central offices.

To 'build...' communities

The United Synagogue can capture areas of growth in the UK Jewish community. But it needs to be able to deploy its resources effectively and quickly. It is in a unique position to create regional 'Jewish destinations', leveraging its assets to create hubs of Jewish activity in and around its synagogues that enrich the Jewish lives of its members. Two pillars of activity build upon this foundation:

- Invest in areas with a growing Jewish population, across the UK
- Renovate and reconfigure synagogue properties as 'Jewish Destinations'

Invest in growing Jewish areas across the UK.

The United Synagogue is currently over-represented in Jewishly-declining areas. If its community is to grow, the United Synagogue must invest in areas where Jews are living.

Building communities is an active process. The US will need to prioritise financial and human resources towards growing and nascent communities and away from declining communities. To do so, The US will first need to understand the full potential of its asset portfolio.

To capture nascent growth, The US will need to be able to shift its resources quickly with a flexible and low-cost model for opening synagogues. It will need to systematically spot trends and identify communities of potential to 'grab the land'. The US will also need to manage decline in its communities in a clear and transparent way – through indicators and policies for communities in various stages of decline.

Renovate and reconfigure US properties as 'Jewish Destinations'.

It is not enough for The US to build buildings for synagogue services. Many stakeholders believe US synagogues can and should be a home for all kinds of Jewish life; that US synagogues can provide innovative, engaging non-religious programming and services in a Jewish context, at scale. In short, The US could create regional 'Jewish Destinations' or, put another way, hubs for Jewish activity, using its properties as a jumping-off point. The US will need to define the most effective location for regional hubs and align all stakeholders around the value-added offerings in each of 'destinations'.

To create these hubs, properties must be fit for purpose – too many buildings are old and run down; as one interviewee said: *"...people don't like spending time in old and decaying buildings."*

Make US communities '...vibrant and engaged...'

This theme emerged consistently throughout the Review as an important focus for The US. Nearly three quarters of US members describe having *"a community that is welcoming and engaging"* as very important. As well as engaging religious services and support in times of need, many members say non-religious activities would encourage them to get more involved with their synagogue community. Stakeholders agree that The US can and should provide more than prayer alone, that its synagogues can become houses of social connection, homes of community, where members connect, engage with their Judaism, and enjoy themselves. Six pillars of activity can enable this transformation:

- Develop varied and exciting offerings
- Prioritise engagement with young people
- Develop exceptional rabbis
- Attract strong lay and professional leadership
- Improve the member experience at important touch points
- Codify and share best practice in community building

Develop varied and exciting offerings

Members currently see US synagogues as houses of prayer. To make US communities vibrant 'Jewish destinations' they require exciting and varied offerings. In the words of one interviewee, *"people could join their shul to access more than just davening"*.

All members prioritise a welcoming and engaging community in their decision to join a synagogue. But one size does not fit all. The United Synagogue's membership has different needs and

aspirations. Different segments of its membership require dedicated offerings and, of course, every synagogue is different. The US can develop a segmented approach to providing cultural and social activities in its synagogues to attract a cross-section of their members to become more engaged with synagogue life.

Over 60% say engaging religious services are very important to their decision to join a synagogue but only around 40% say their synagogue's services are engaging. This important area is one where The US can help its synagogues learn from and build on success from around the community (working closely with the Chief Rabbi and his Beth Din).

Prioritise engagement with young people in their communities

With disengagement in UK Jewry potentially as high as 1,000 per year over the last decade, all stakeholders agree that engaging with youth is vitally important to the community and its future. Members responding to the survey rank this as a top priority for the United Synagogue. The implication of not engaging with youth is that the community will decline.

Analysis suggests The US could increase its impact with youth by: engaging young people in their communities, with their families, through dedicated youth rabbis; increasing its share of the Israel-tour 'market'; (continued) light touch engagement with US youth on campus; then through regional young professionals teams, closely aligned with synagogues, once students return from campus.

Develop exceptional rabbis

Rabbis are crucial to the success of US synagogues. However, The US faces tough competition to recruit talented young rabbis, for instance from kiruv (outreach) organisations, which interviewees suggest are able to offer more compelling remuneration.

To understand the scope to improve rabbinic provision across the community, The US, working with the leadership of the Rabbinat (P'eur, RCUS and the Chief Rabbi), might systematically assess performance along key metrics of member satisfaction (aligned with the needs of individual communities). This would enable The US to identify top-performers who can be leveraged more widely around the community as well as those who need additional support to reach their potential.

In addition, there is currently no clear career development path for US rabbis. The US can help its rabbis grow and develop by more clearly defining rabbinic roles and responsibilities, providing structured training, and developing opportunities for rabbis to take on community wide leadership roles.

The current value proposition for rabbis in the United Synagogue is stability. But stability can lead to stagnation. Currently, the only way for a talented junior rabbi to progress is if a senior rabbi steps aside or steps down. Promoting 'mobility' for US rabbis would enable career development, providing step-up opportunities, and enable a wider range of communities to benefit from talented rabbis.

Attract strong lay and professional leadership

There are some incredibly talented people in the United Synagogue community but many capable leaders in our community do not view serving their synagogue or The US, centrally, as an impactful role – all but one honorary officer election in 2014 was unopposed and many positions were left unfilled.

To develop more incredible leaders in the community, The US might seek to develop a community leadership training programme that identifies, trains, and mentors future leaders, potentially partnering with cross-communal organisations or external providers to deliver this training. It is worth noting that two members of the current Trustee board are graduates of a similar programme that was terminated several years ago.

There is currently no way for senior figures in the community, who do not want to serve on a synagogue board, to engage with The US. The US could more systematically engage experienced individuals from within the community to give these valuable figures a way to engage and for The US to benefit from their experience, expertise and networks.

Looking at local leadership, enabling the possibility of longer Honorary Officer ('HO') terms of office would allow synagogue leadership time to develop and implement strategic plans. Structured HO training and ensuring a minimum level of qualification for candidates to Financial Representative roles would also position synagogue leadership for impact.

Finally, The US can build skills amongst its staff through a structured training programme and through enforcing performance management for synagogue administrators, who are in many cases the only interaction prospective/ members have with their synagogues.

Improve the member experience at important formal touch points

From joining a synagogue, to paying their bills, to marriage arrangements, members find dealing with their synagogue and the United Synagogue to be challenging and uninspiring. This review highlights five areas where the experience could be improved: joining a community, marriage, membership retention, communications, and membership fees.

Members overwhelmingly prioritise a "welcoming and engaging community" in their decision to join their synagogue. A community wide new-member induction process, focusing synagogue leadership on membership, could help ensure members feel welcome from the moment they sign on the dotted line – the 'birth' of the member relationship.

The period after marriage is unique, it is the only period in which membership of a synagogue is mandatory. However, the current marriage process is complex and off putting. The US could look to reframe the marriage process (within the bounds of halacha) to strengthen the role of local synagogues and their rabbis, who can be encouraged to promote the value of membership, and automate as much of the process as possible.

Analysis suggests that The US loses members each year unnecessarily, but that those members may not be irretrievably lost. Rabbis can be empowered to help retain lapsed/defaulting members in their communities, as part of a community wide process for dealing with default. Where members do decide to leave their synagogue, The US might seek to retain them, at a community level, to ensure they are not lost.

Closely coupled to members' experience of the United Synagogue is the way synagogues communicate with members. One young interviewee said, "*my shul never contacts me or my parents unless they're asking for money*". Synagogues are missing opportunities to excite and inspire their members and to explain the value for money, and this is a major point of dissatisfaction amongst US members.

Finally, many of The US' largest communities are in the least affordable areas of the country. There is a huge 'cost-of-entry' for young couples which The US could help mitigate by reassessing its membership packages for young marrieds. Phasing the current young membership discount

(‘Tribe Community Membership’) could reduce the ‘shock’ of moving to full fees. Rebranding the discount as ‘Young US membership’ would help root members’ relationship with their synagogue rather than with Tribe. Finally, encouraging members to pay their bills by Direct Debit would make bills less daunting and make it easier for synagogues to retain their members.

Codify and share best practice in community building

There are great stories of success around the United Synagogue community. Synagogues which were once the very model of decline are now thriving. However, there remains tremendous variation in member satisfaction between synagogues, across many different dimensions of the membership experience.

The US can help its synagogues better address members’ needs by, first, understanding what these synagogues are doing so well and codifying this ‘best practice’, then disseminating it amongst synagogue leadership, helping to embed new practices within synagogues for example through a Chairpersons forum or the HO training mentioned earlier.

Regular measurement is essential to continuous improvement. The US might develop a ‘synagogue barometer’ based on various metrics of member engagement and satisfaction, as part of a balanced scorecard, to help its synagogues learn and translate that learning into action.

‘...at the forefront of British Jewry’

Most members consider the United Synagogue to be a well-established institution, with 69% of members recognising The US as a beacon for mainstream and central Orthodoxy. However, members expect the United Synagogue to lead within British Jewry. Most believe it is failing to do so. This is a call to action; a challenge to rebuild the United Synagogue’s stature in the community. Two pillars of activity can support this:

- Represent the community’s voice in society and inspire British Jewry
- Continue to provide essential communal religious infrastructure

Represent the community’s voice in society and inspire British Jewry

Interviewees say The US has ‘lost its voice’ and is missing opportunities to inspire and lead the community. This is echoed in the survey – members expect the US to lead but few believe it is doing so.

Rather than devolving responsibility for key Orthodox issues to cross-communal bodies, the United Synagogue could become the voice of its community. Working with its rabbinic leadership and mobilising its grass roots membership, The US can speak up on issues that affect the community’s interests.

The US is in a unique position to champion themes of Jewish practice or interest, for example the ShabbatUK or 70 Days for 70 Years projects, which champion, respectively, celebration of Shabbat and learning/Holocaust remembrance. These campaigns can be incredibly powerful ways to bring the community together and give members something to be proud of.

As the largest synagogal body in Europe, The US can play on a bigger stage, for example by convening a European conference of lay leadership to share best practice, coordinate activity and share resources, or by creating the religious infrastructure to support potential increases in immigration from Europe.

Continue to provide best-in-class religious infrastructure

The United Synagogue is responsible for the largest body of Jewish communal infrastructure in the UK. The US is recognised as very strong in ‘essential religious infrastructure’ and the survey highlights how important this essential infrastructure is to US members.

The Burial Society is seen as distinctive and members are largely satisfied with its services. The London Beth Din is recognised as a leading halachic authority amongst observant Jews though some stakeholders expressed concerns that members may not identify with its ethos (questions of halacha and religious ethos were not in scope for this strategic review).

The US’ Kashrut Division is currently the fifth or sixth largest certification authority in the world – a highly competitive market, with an estimated over 1,200 certification authorities competing for business. Interviews with the Kashrut Division suggest the main opportunity to improve The US’ kashrut provision is to increase awareness of KLBD amongst ingredients manufacturers, and it is in the process of boosting its local-market presence in the Far East to this end. Up to date research on the size of the market would likely support this effort and The US might look to commission a study to determine the scope for new markets for kosher food.

Finally, many US members are concerned about the costs of keeping kosher in the UK, particularly the cost of Kosher meat. To respond to members’ concerns, The US might lead a call for a study into kosher meat prices in the UK, for instance by the shechita authorities of which The US is a member. It might also investigate the potential for partnerships with other Kashrut authorities to deliver cost savings to US members.

Cross-cutting enablers

Throughout the review, two themes emerged as potential enablers to support a strategy for the United Synagogue: nimbler governance, and improved interactions between synagogues and the US central office.

The governance of the United Synagogue is widely seen as outdated and ineffective, stifling innovation and flexibility. To improve its governance structures, The US can strengthen and focus its Trustees, reinforcing their core fiduciary and strategic roles and ensuring clear separation from operational management. Revising the requirement for trustees to have served on a synagogue board could help draw in a broad range of talent from around the community amongst leaders who may not be willing or able to serve on a synagogue board. Evolving US Council to a smaller body, elected by and from amongst synagogue Chairs, would help ensure The US more effectively benefits from valuable input from its lay leaders.

A community wide strategy will require all facets of the United Synagogue to work towards the same goal and will require a shift in mindset from ‘my synagogue’ to ‘our (US-wide) community’. The interaction between The US’ central support function and its ‘delivery arms’, the synagogues, is critical to this transformation. Interviews and focus groups suggest improvements could be made across four dimensions of the relationship: (a) People, by appointing dedicated ‘synagogue liaisons’ from amongst existing staff at the US’ central office to coordinate central support to synagogues, (b) Processes, where The US can make management information provided to its synagogues simpler and more transparent, (c) Payover, which can be fairer, more transparent and, whilst it is not just a ‘synagogue’s communal contribution’, but also a contribution to the community, should be as small as possible, and (d) Promotion, to create a balance between strong local and central brands.

Next steps and implementation

The United Synagogue's strategic review highlights the need for change in the community: US synagogues must evolve from being solely houses of prayer to become homes for community. To many, the results of the research carried out for this review will not be surprising. Many of the strategic initiatives discussed in this report will not be new. Some will undoubtedly have been tried, with varying degrees of success. And some are already being implemented.

The success of this strategy lives within its implementation. Over the coming months/years, the United Synagogue will need a sophisticated approach to change, one that translates the 40 initiatives outlined in this report into concrete action at both a central and a local level. Change at a central level alone will not be enough to deliver The US' strategy. It must be infused throughout the community and all The US' stakeholders aligned and engaged with the strategy. This is no easy task.

But Implementation programmes are about more than the initiatives themselves. They require fundamental shifts in mindsets amongst key stakeholders to ensure the organisation can sustain that performance over time. There are five frames/stages of change that The US will need to address:

- **Aspire.** Setting ambitious but achievable targets
- **Assess.** Determining gaps in systems and mindsets
- **Architect.** Developing The US' portfolio of initiatives and levers to drive change
- **Act.** Rolling the initiatives out in a structured process, building broad ownership
- **Advance.** Driving continuous improvement and leadership development

A strategy such as the one outlined here cannot be implemented overnight. In fact, it will likely take many many months to put in motion a substantial proportion of the initiatives described in this report. However, as Rabbi Tarfon says:

"It is not your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world], but you are not free to desist from it either."

The United Synagogue's strategic review may be over. But this strategy is not yet complete. Rather, it is intended to be a living, breathing process that evolves and adapts over time and with changing circumstance.

The challenges facing the United Synagogue are immense but if this review has highlighted anything, it is that the community has the strength to meet those challenges. With dedication, effort and resilience, The US can build vibrant, engaged communities that are at the forefront of British Jewry.

Summary of strategic initiatives

Building communities

Invest in growing Jewish areas across the UK

- (1) Review The US' property portfolio and develop asset management plans (Page 46)
- (2) Identify communities of potential to 'grab the land' with a flexible model and streamlined process to open new communities (Page 46)
- (3) Manage decline in a clear, transparent and fair way by defining clear policies and approach to communities in various stages of decline (Page 48)

Reconfigure US properties as regional 'Jewish Destinations'

- (4) Create regional hubs for a wide range of Jewish activity in US synagogues (Page 50)
- (5) Ensure properties are fit for purpose (Page 51)

Making US communities vibrant and engaging

Develop varied and exciting offerings

- (6) Develop a community wide approach to make religious services more engaging (within the bounds of halacha) (Page 59)
- (7) Develop a segmented approach to cultural and social and 'functional' offerings in synagogues (Page 60)
- (8) Leverage the community's resources to provide value-added services to the community (Page 62)

Prioritise engagement with youth in their communities

- (9) Employ community youth rabbis to engage with youth in their communities (Page 66)
- (10) Increase significantly The US' share of the Israel-Tour 'market' through pricing and promotion (Page 68)
- (11) Engage with youth at university in a light-touch way (Page 70)
- (12) Appoint young professionals teams in communities, at a regional level, to engage with youth on their return from campus (Page 71)
- (13) Ensure lean, effective central management of youth provision (Page 72)

Develop exceptional rabbis

- (14) Assess current rabbinic talent pool across the community along metrics of member satisfaction (Page 73)
- (15) Create opportunities for rabbinic growth through defined rabbinic portfolios, structured training, and opportunities for community wide leadership (Page 74)
- (16) Change the US' rabbinic model by promoting 'mobility' for rabbis to move around the community (Page 75)

Attract strong lay and professional leadership

- (17) Systematically identify and develop leaders in the community (Page 77)
- (18) Professionalise and strengthen synagogue lay leadership (Page 78)
- (19) Develop a proactive structured training programme for US professional staff and ensure all staff (including synagogue administrators) are reviewed annually (Page 79)
- (20) Systematically leverage talent and experience within the community to advise and support the United Synagogue (Page 80)

Improve the member experience at important formal touch points

- (21) Develop a community wide new member induction process and refocus synagogue leadership on member engagement (Page 81)
- (22) Remodel the marriage process (within the bounds of halacha) to strengthen the role of synagogues and community rabbis, automate as much of the process as possible, and use the process to 'promote' the value of US membership (Page 82)
- (23) Systematise the process for dealing with default, empowering rabbis to retain members (Page 84)
- (24) Systematically use communications with members to articulate the benefits of synagogue membership (Page 86)
- (25) Reassess membership packages for new and newly married members and make it easier to pay synagogue bills (Page 87)

Codify and share best practice in community building.

- (26) Codify and disseminate drivers of satisfaction in the most vibrant communities (Page 90)
- (27) Develop tools for ongoing measurement of member engagement and satisfaction (Page 90)

Leading the community

Represent the community's voice in society

- (28) Take a leadership position and mobilise grass roots membership on issues of concern to Orthodox Jewry (Page 94)
- (29) Create flagship, community wide programmes to inspire British Jewry (Page 95)
- (30) Play on a bigger stage by attracting overseas communities to the United Synagogue and establishing a European conference of lay leadership (Page 95)

Continue to provide best-in-class religious infrastructure

- (31) Increase awareness of KLBD amongst ingredients manufacturers (Page 98)
- (32) Commission a study to determine marketing opportunities for the KLBD Kosher brand (Page 99)
- (33) Investigate potential to make kosher food more accessible (Page 99)

Cross-cutting enablers

Governance

- (34) Strengthen and focus the United Synagogue's Trustee body (Page 102)
- (35) Revise the synagogue board requirement for US Trustees (Page 104)
- (36) Develop US Council into a smaller, more focused 'Council of Chairs' (Page 104)

Address interaction between local synagogues and The US' central office

- (37) Appoint dedicated 'synagogue liaisons' from amongst existing staff to coordinate central support to synagogues, clearly communicating remits and responsibilities of all organs of the United Synagogue (Page 106)
- (38) Make management information provided to synagogues simpler and more transparent (Page 107)
- (39) Reform the payover model to make it fairer, more transparent and, ultimately, as low as possible (Page 108)
- (40) Help US synagogues develop their own brand identities within and supportive of the global United Synagogue brand (Page 110)