

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



A thousand years of God's love in Suffolk

Minutes of the Forum meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday 20 January 2021

Present: Canon Matthew Vernon (Chair) Very Rev Joe Hawes Tim Allen Sarah-Jane Allison Canon Philip Banks Margaret Bond Canon Cedric Catton Susan Cockram David Eaton Gray Elkin Paul Elkin Margaret Ellis Rev Sarah Geileskey Charles Hamel-Cooke Alex Knock James Knowles Jane Leung Louise Martin Jane Olive Leslie Olive Barbara Pycraft Pam Pitts Alice Sheepshanks Susie Sloane Sam Vernon

1. **Welcome:** Matthew opened with a prayer and welcomed new members, Alice Sheepshanks, Alex Knock, Sam Vernon and Fiona Knapp.

2. **Apologies:** Rachel Clover Dominic Holmes Sue Hughes Fiona Knapp (part) Valerie Moore Jane Movley Terry Stark Louise Stewart Doreen Young

3. **Minutes:** The Minutes of 12 February 2020 were approved.

4. **Matters Arising: Hope into Action** - Matthew reported that this was still being investigated despite the pandemic. Norwich Cathedral are positive about their two houses in this scheme and the social action in practice has been warmly welcomed by their congregation. The initiative usually involves a church raising a large sum of money to buy a house which would be challenging for us. Fortunately Hope into Action have had significant donations so that most of the funding for a house could come from elsewhere. We would have a target of about £15-20k from individual donors. Barbara Pycraft reported that she had hoped to arrange a lecture on **data protection**, this is still on the radar despite lockdown.

5. **Dean's Report:** A report from Dean Joe had been circulated prior to the meeting. Alex Knock asked about the **St James School site**, which as a middle school was closed some time ago. Suffolk County Council and the Diocesan Board of Education have agreed another school on this site is not needed. They plan to sell off the site and use the money to fund building another secondary church school. Dean Joe as a Trustee is fighting for some of this funding to be made available for building improvements for St Edmundsbury Primary School. The site itself will be sold for housing – hopefully both for social housing as well as high end housing. Support was expressed from Forum members for Dean Joe's input as one of the trustee's.

Cathedrals Measure – This will involve a change to the Cathedral's Constitution and Statutes, we need to appoint a senior non executive member of Chapter and we need to decide if we should remain a Parish Church Cathedral or not. Sarah-Jane Allison's job title is now confirmed as Chief Operating Officer.

6. **Finance Update:** A report from Sarah-Jane Allison had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Cathedral Measure will affect our finance situation. Since January when the supplied figures were compiled we now see a slight deficit, although the Auditors are still working with us but it looks like a £6k deficit at the end of the year. Thanks were expressed to all planned givers, patrons and fund raisers. Grants have been received and staff must also be thanked for keeping so tightly to their budgets. Cathedral Enterprises (Shop & TIP, Pilgrim's Kitchen and income from rent of the Edmund Room) reported a £39k loss – however £30k was paid into the Cathedral funds for their services. The actual loss is therefore about £3.5k. Good news in that Pilgrim's Kitchen took more money in August than the year before – showing the benefit of the external seating. The shop also had a few days

of very high income with pre-Christmas shopping before the current lockdown. Joe thanked everyone for their congregational donations which are astonishingly generous.

7. Discussion: Financial Contribution to the Diocese – following a plea for financial support for the diocese Joe is proposing a sum of £20k is donated as a one-off. St Edmundsbury and Ipswich is a young diocese and is in dire need. We must note that we receive free support for the Service Level Agreement for Safeguarding and maintenance for residential properties, although we don't charge the diocese for hospitality, and we also do not give a parish share. Opinions were sought from Forum members. A number of members confirmed this was the right thing to do especially as smaller parishes than the cathedral are donating. It was noted that the parishes often support us at evening services. As a Cathedral Parish Church it is the least we can do. One person had slight misgivings about whether we were in as good a position as St Mary's financially? Are we too close to the edge? It was confirmed that St Mary's are also not in a great financial position. We do have a legacy of £150,000 coming from the late Beatrice Warren in June 2021 – which would increase our reserves to just under £300,000. The sum of £20,000 to the diocese was suggested to Chapter as a meaningful contribution. If agreed this would need careful communication and explanation to the congregation. Are there other ways to support the diocese apart from a one off donation? Joe has been trying to improve good relations with the diocese and the cathedral, and we do that with clergy resources already but this does not help pay the bills. The donation could come from our reserves rather than from planned giving which helps maintains our day to day finances. Philip reminded us that in a similar way we do give to charity from our day to day resources, a donation to the diocese could be seen in the same light. It was also noted that Legacies ought to be kept intact for major project work. We could be a bit more generous than £20k. Forum were thanked for their frank and helpful input and our feedback would be taken into consideration.

8. Liturgy & Music: A detailed report from Canon Philip had been circulated prior to the meeting. The question was raised - are the boys and girls top line staying separate? Is this sustainable going forward? Philip confirmed they will stay separate except for key services at Festivals like Christmas and Easter. The Music Department are in touch virtually with schools for recruitment. The number of new members has been exceptional during the last year and we currently have 14 girls and 12 boys on the books.

Deanery plans – permissions are still being sought to remove the main staircase and restore the atrium to its original plan. The top floor small bedrooms also require a new bathroom and a new staircase installed. The funding for this is not sufficient at the moment so a loan is required – but will be recouped from the subsequent renting of the West Wing and Clopton Cottage. It may not be possible to complete by the autumn of 2021. Dean Joe is hoping to plan a Christmas party in the new deanery!

9. AOB - Questions from members – Louise Martin was voted on as Forum Secretary for another year. Terry Stark was proposed as Vice Chairman (to alternate with Barbara Pycraft every year). **Sanctuary Housing** – the 5 flats above the Hunter Gallery have had various issues which suggest their tenants have not been looked after properly – a solicitor's letter is being drafted to address this.

The meeting finished with prayers at 8.05pm

Louise Martin/Jan 2021

Forum dates 2021: APCM 28 April - TBC