

Guild of St Edmund Committee Meeting

Thursday 14 September 2023 at 10 am

1. LM welcomed everyone to the meeting and MV led the opening prayers.
2. **Apologies** were received from 5 members.
3. **Minutes** of the meeting held on 11 May 2023 were approved.
Matters arising: No representative of the St Edmundsbury Singers has yet been appointed. Due to pressure of priorities, it has not yet been possible to find a date for the Volunteer marketplace event.
Kneelers –The kneeler working group met and has made a proposal which is being discussed by Chapter. An example of the Cathedral’s kneelers appears in a newly published book on the subject.
4. **Cathedral update**
MV gave an overview of events and large-scale services which are due to take place in the coming week: 50th anniversary of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, Pet Service, Bury Drop In service, Prison Sunday, County Harvest.
In recent weeks there have been several significant events: Beer Festival, Gin Festival. These have been well received with positive feedback via one of the chaplains on duty.
JD (The Yard project) is now working in collaboration with the charity Innovate. As part of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, an application to the NLHF is being prepared for submission in mid November.
The CFCE has met to discuss the application to remove the pews and replace with chairs. Formal confirmation of the decision is awaited.
Recruitment of non-executive members of Chapter is going well.
Eco St Eds, led by the curate, is focusing on sourcing funding for solar panels to be placed where they are not visible from ground level.
An update on the Deanery project is being made at the October Chapter meeting.

Income from events is performing well. The Grand Nave dinner is on 6 October and will be a major fundraising event. Cathedral Enterprises is doing well. Visitor donations and Planned Giving are not performing as well as expected against the budget. Budget setting for 2024 will commence in October.
5. **Volunteering Update**
Recruitment
We continue to have a steady trickle of new volunteers for different roles. Since we last met, there is a new chaplain, new TIP volunteer, new Shop volunteer, new Welcomer and two new LEGO volunteers.

ChurchSuite

Thanks to assistance from DP, we are now able to process the volunteer applications via ChurchSuite. There is a programme which allows you to work through a process, with each stage being checked through ChurchSuite. New volunteers will receive the application form, all documents (such as Volunteer Agreement and Handbook) via ChurchSuite and their responses are logged there.

It is a great step forward. However the rotas module is still to be 'conquered'. We are working with Bristol Cathedral who use the same system to try and get this to work to suit our needs.

Disability awareness training

We have recently had our Accessibility guide updated. This is available to visitors on our website and allows them to check in advance what facilities we offer for those with additional needs.

Following the successful dementia awareness training, it is hoped to organise other awareness training over the winter months (possibly 'How to offer a welcome to visually impaired visitors' or maybe sign language).

Donations

We rely heavily on our visitor donations. We had a good session earlier in the year with the Welcome Stewards and looked at the role of the welcome steward and the part they play in encouraging donations. A three month trial is beginning with the donations boxes more prominently positioned, including a video with the Dean setting out the case for the need for donations. The trial period will give the opportunity to see whether the changes make a substantial difference to donations, but expectations need to be realistic. There was discussion about other factors which influence people donating, such as LEGO. A child-friendly donation box was suggested, and a more radical re-think of the cash donation box.

Visitor Survey

An amazing team of volunteers has been helping throughout the past 12 months gather data on our visitors by carrying out a visitor survey. They collected 527 surveys and we now await the analysis which will help us get a much better idea of what a 'cathedral visitor' looks like and will influence our planning for future activities and marketing.

6. Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains in our sights and DP, HR and Safeguarding Administrator, oversees the administration of this. Safeguarding training is mandatory. It is not possible to be a volunteer unless the training is completed

7. Guild Annual Meeting

Feedback was good, especially the tours and visits before the main meeting.

8. Plans for Edmundtide meeting (20 November 2023)

The gathering will start with a Eucharist at 1 pm, followed by lunch in the Edmund Room. SD agreed to give an illustrated talk about the Ancient Library. A town guide will be asked if he might talk at the 2024 AGM.

9. Open Forum

Guides – two guides have died recently (Don Hill and David Jagger). There have been two talks by external speakers – David Bradley on the topography of Bury St Edmunds and Canon Andrew Vessey on ideas for an Arts and Crafts tour of the Cathedral. The guides suggested ideas for the new Food and Drink leaflet. The Ancient Library is open for Heritage Open Days.

Gardens – The team is in good heart and is at full strength. Changing the height of the beech hedge seems to have been well received. The re-seeding of the lawn in the Remembrance garden is an ongoing issue. The temporary path alongside the Abbey wall will remain in place for some time (and is out of our control).

Chaplains – there is a full rota which continues now throughout the year except January and February.

Welcomers – everything is going well with about 40 Welcome Stewards on the rota. There are still a few gaps so more volunteers are always welcome.

Learning Hub – Family activities in May and the summer brought contact with 140 children and their parents/grandparents. A new display of work created at these events can be found at the bottom of the North transept stairs. The cost of coaches and teachers strikes have impacted the number of school visits. Nevertheless the Learning Hub has worked with about 100 children. There has recently been a number of new bookings. The team will be involved in the Harvest service.

The Cathedral Shop is doing well and keeping to targets, despite a drop in visitors during the hot weather. The Christmas stock is starting to arrive, so volunteers are kept busy, pricing and checking stock.

Sunday Morning Coffee is available every week except Christmas Eve, Remembrance Sunday and the Sunday after the Christmas Market. All is going well with donations covering costs.

Flower arrangers – they are preparing for Harvest. There is an acute shortage of flower arrangers so it is good to have the support of the parish flower arrangers. SF and SC will discuss the best method of recruitment.

Vergers – LW has become the Deputy Head Verger. Paul and Keith continue as volunteer vergers. Rhys has been assisting with livestreaming as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award.

There are 17 concert/event stewards who support the growing events and concerts programme. It was good to have stewards on duty at the Gin Festival. The Christmas Market is on the horizon. CP is joining the events team and will focus on corporate events. It was noted that due to the increase in events, the Friends of Cathedral Choirs benefit through their sales of drinks. The Silent Disco brought a particularly significant profit.

LEGO – More than 118,500 bricks have now been added. Plans are being discussed to shorten the remaining build time (6 years).

Young Families - the Friday morning session averages about 15 to 20 parents with their children each week. There is a great team of volunteers. Diddy Disciples run alongside and it is good that Anita stays and chats to the families.

10. **AOB** – Thanks to the Vergers team for their hard work and positive, friendly disposition.

11. Closing Prayers were led by GP

Date of forthcoming meetings

Guild Committee Meetings 2024

25 January – Edmund Room

9 May – Chapter Room

12 September – Chapter Room

All at 10 am

Annual Guild meeting 2024

Thursday 6 June at 4.00 pm