

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



Minutes of the Forum meeting held on Tuesday 13 February 2024

1. Present: Canon Matthew Vernon (Chair), Sarah-Jane Allison, Chris Andrews, Canon Philip Banks, Alan Bond, Margaret Bond, Lorna Brook, Dean Joe Hawes, Geoffrey House, Sue Hughes, Fiona Knapp, Sandra Lant, Robert Lant, Frank Leung, Jane Leung, Louise Martin, Cressida Parsons, Pam Pitts, Barbara Pycraft, Katie Schutte, Albert Shipton, Dan Soper, Terry Stark, Hugh Steavenson, Margaret Steavenson, Liz Steele, Margaret Wheeldon, Doreen Young.

2. Welcome: Canon Matthew welcomed Cressida Parsons, Katie Schutte and Dan Soper (planned giving group) to the meeting. The meeting then opened with a prayer and a reading from Psalm 104. It was noted that this was Louise Martin's last meeting as secretary.

3. Apologies: Sue Cockram, Gray Elkin, Paul Elkin, James Knowles, Jane Olive, Rev Anita Rooney, Liz Rowlands, Alice Sheepshanks, James Stark.

4. Minutes: Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were approved and duly signed.

5. The Future of Forum – Canon Matthew Vernon

Forum terms of reference

This should be the last version before it goes to Chapter in March. There were no further comments or issues raised and it was unanimously accepted by those in attendance at the meeting.

6. Safeguarding (for information and questions) – Sarah-Jane Allison

Safeguarding Sunday took place on 14 Jan 2024 – second time we have had a safeguarding Sunday. Feedback has been received from every service where the offering was slightly different. It was noted that perhaps there was too much information, and that we might take it back to a more simplistic version. The version given at the 9am service used the national church material with 'Rory the Lion', might be a suitable format. Could we make it more meaningful to the group attending each service? It wasn't a discussion but a lot of information being given. Is a discussion feasible at a service of 200 plus people? Perhaps a homily might be more suitable. For visitors at the services the information on governance may have been off-putting. Difficulties with hearing from the back of the nave, so thread was lost. Another idea is a roving mike for Q and A among the congregation. May need to know in advance that this will be happening so that people feel more confident in speaking. It was questioned whether the whole committee being there was required? Good to have Cathedral staff however.

7. Dean's Report (for information and questions) – Dean Joe Hawes

Living in Love and Faith

This remains a contentious and controversial issue for the Church of England which is deeply divided despite a 6 year process in learning to provide for LGBTGI members. A two thirds majority of General Synod is needed for a stand-alone blessing service, but that would not be achieved so a suite of resources for inclusion in existing services has been offered instead. There has been bad feeling on both sides and there have been resignations from the LLF sub group of the General Synod. The proposal that regional arrangements based on

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whether a progressive or a traditional view predominates might be a sensible way forward. Revd Dr Tom Woolford was appointed as interim theological advisor to the House of Bishops without the knowledge of LLF Bishops – which prompted the resignation of Bishop Helen Ann Hartley of Newcastle. Following this 10 commitments were made by Bishop Martyn Snow – the last Bishop on the LLF committee – which will be presented to the next synod. Synod needs our prayers that we treat each other well, and love each other whilst not agreeing. As a Cathedral, we are not allowed to offer any more standalone same-sex services. Does Jessica Martin's appointment to the House of Bishops change anything? As a progressive she will balance the more traditional appointment. Matthew thanked Joe for his work in this area.

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Governance is strengthened by the appointment of Paul Torrington as Chair of the Finance Committee. Mrs Susie Henson is the new King Edward VI's School Foundation Governor following Revd Laura Mumford's resignation owing to her new role as Chaplain of the Royal Hospital School. They will be looking for another foundation governor soon as Cressida Parsons leaves us in July. New acting heads have been appointed at St Edmundsbury primary school. The December Chapter meeting was not quorate as a majority of non-exec members need to be present (five). Electronic voting after a meeting is available for this situation and was used for a couple of non-controversial decisions.

8. Financial Report (for information and questions) Sarah-Jane

Where are we currently

The £88k deficit budgeted for the 2023 end of year is projected to have a small surplus of £1k. A one-off grant from the church commissioners (as we were short of cash flow) had helped with this, along with areas such as Enterprises and Events exceeding their budgeted income. Visitor income fell short with the unexpected war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis impacts. Further details will be given at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in April. The Annual Report will change this year as we are a charity with the Charity Commissioners requesting slightly different information. We will have an additional report showing all the department and area reports in a Cathedral Community Report for the APCM and the Guild.

Budget for 2024 is £42k deficit with a forecast 33k deficit at the end of January. PKs is taking £1k a day which is the first time they have taken that daily amount in January so a good start.

9. Paid welcomers (Cressida and Katie)

Last year we applied to the Cathedral Sustainability Fund for an additional post for fund raising and events and Katie Schutte was appointed. Katie has been with us for 4 weeks, she hails from Norfolk but has Suffolk links. Graduated in English from Oxford in 2022, she is excited to be with us.

A presentation had recently been given to welcomers about the new paid welcome roles to work alongside existing volunteers. The first person a visitor will meet is the paid welcomer to encourage donations and record more accurately the number of visitors. They will report to Cressida and Katie, working closely with Sarah Friswell and the volunteers to ensure all visitors continue to receive a warm welcome. We need to increase the average giving for visitors which is currently 76p. The new welcomers will start just after Easter. Matthew reiterated that we will not charge visitors to enter the Cathedral but seek to gain more donations. There was concern raised that the pleasure of welcoming visitors will be diminished for the volunteers. The two roles will need to work in harmony – to be taken into

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consideration by Sarah and Cressida. The success of the welcome Video will be reviewed and the content of the video will change going forward. It was noticed that the job description for the paid welcomer describes exactly what the volunteers have been offering – some concerns over this. Reassurance was given that both roles are required. It was asked how group bookings will be dealt with? They will in general be booked in advance with any relevant fees for tours and guides paid in advance. During busy periods extra welcomers may be available. More groups are being encouraged. Stewards who deliberately wait until the end of person's visit might be better placed? - this will be considered and monitored. Other Cathedrals have introduced these roles and it has worked for them. Sarah Friswell is assisting with the interviews to ensure the right people are appointed to work with the volunteers. Concern raised that a welcome should not be linked with requests for money. Volunteers and staff need to work together to make this work. New equipment will be available to record numbers and offer gift aid.

10. Property update (Canon Philip)

James Stark returns to work after paternity leave on Wednesday 14th Feb. Thanks expressed to Steve Cole who works 3 days a week but manages to deal with all maintenance / property issues in that time, eg installing new crozier stands, and dealing with a masonry fall just before the nine lessons and carols service in December. We are progressing with applying for Solar panels, fund raising will be the next hurdle to face. The sale of 3 Crown Street is in the pipeline, to facilitate income generating projects such as updating the Deanery and renting out the resulting West Wing property. Also refurbishing the flats above the Hunter Galley and finally hopefully to put money back into the reserves. It was asked for tower lighting reasons to be made available for the public – Catherine Rayson to action. A survey on potential bats and squirrels in the Deanery had to be undertaken causing a delay in the planning applications.

11. Music update (Canon Philip)

Director of Music

Tim and Cressida Parsons will be leaving in July for Tim to take up a new post as Director of Music at Wells Cathedral. We wish them well in their move and are grateful for all they have achieved with us. Consequently Director of Music interviews are planned for 19 and 20 March.

Richard Hubbard leads the in-harmony project will now be funded by the Diocese for the next two years as his role will be increasing in the Diocese. A shift of funding in this area will help with our budget.

12. Chairs (Canon Philip)

Chairs are coming but not arriving just yet because of European supply issues. The 7 March launch has been postponed. Hopefully it will be soon. Some chairs at the East end of the North and South Aisles will be available for those who want them. The pews are currently being sold or soon to be repurposed for sale. The Theo chairs are on site and available to be used when required.

13. AOB

Fiona Knapp and Margaret Wheeldon offered to provide drinks for the next Forum meeting. Liz Steele mentioned that she is standing down as chairman of the planned giving group as required due to already having served more than the recommended three-year term twice. Expressed thanks to Liz by the Dean and will be again at the APCM.

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14. Forum dates 2024:

Tuesday 14 May. Wednesdays 3 July & 6 November **APCM**: Tuesday 23 April – all at 6:30pm in the Edmund Room.

The meeting closed at 7:55pm.