

# St Edmundsbury Cathedral



**Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Tuesday 13 May 2025 at 6.30 p.m.**

**Present:**

Canon Matthew Vernon, Very Revd Joseph Hawes, Canon Mark Haworth, Fiona Knapp, Sarah-Jane Allison, Terry Stark, Penny Bentley, Sue Cockram, Kierstan Foreman, Valerie Moore, Felix von Nathusius, Liz Rowlands, Alice Sheepshanks, Dan Soper, Simon Waters, Rosemary Austin, Alan Bond, Margaret Bond, Robert Lant, Sandra Lant, Rev'd Tony Rich, Caroline Rouse, Doreen Young, James Stark, Katie Robson.

**1. Opening Prayer and Welcome**

Canon Matthew welcomed everyone to the meeting including the Revd Tony Rich who is visiting this week. We are still in the season of Easter; MV read part of the Psalm 139 and prayed the Collect set for Morning Prayer today.

**2. Apologies**

MV welcomed newly elected members Alice Sheepshanks and Felix von Nathusius and Liz Rowlands a returning member.

MV noted that, with the majority of the elected members' terms set to expire in 2027, consideration would have to be given to finding the best way to ensure that three-year terms are staggered.

Apologies received from: Barbara Pycraft, Pam Pitts, Liz Steele, Catherine Walsh, Abbi Thorpe,

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February**

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted with no comment.

**4. Charitable Giving**

Kierstan Foreman gave a presentation on behalf of the Charitable Giving working group of MV, KF, Judy Broadway and Sue Hughes.

A sum of £4,000 has been allocated to donate this year. The aim is to:

- look at smaller, local charities rather than big national and international ones;
- support charities that are not already supported in other ways by the Cathedral;
- make a commitment for one year rather than two or three years.

It was proposed and agreed that one charity would be selected from each category, with a fourth being selected from those remaining.

The working group identified three themes that they felt spoke to the outlook of the Cathedral.

Researching a dozen charities, the group had made a shortlist of two charities per category. Kierstan made a detailed presentation of the six charities.

a) Environment

- i. Eden-Rose Coppice Trust - <https://www.withnature.org/>
- ii. Suffolk Wildlife Trust - <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/>

b) Isolation

- i. ActivLives - <https://activlives.org.uk/>
- ii. The Befriending Scheme - <https://www.thebefriendingscheme.org.uk/>

c) Mental Health

- i. Suffolk Mind - <https://www.suffolkmind.org.uk/>
- ii. YANA - <https://www.yanahelp.org/>

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Following table discussions, it was decided to stick with the original proposal of supporting four charities. After further discussion, a unanimous decision was made to support Eden-Rose Coppice, ActivLives, The Befriending Scheme and YANA.

Pages presenting these charities are attached as an appendix at the end of these minutes.

## 5. Safeguarding

Sarah-Jane Allison reported that:

- Nationally, following the General Synod, the CoE is at the beginning of a three-year process of restructuring the management of safeguarding and making it more independent. The National Safeguarding Team is going through an audit. S-JA and JH have been sent a questionnaire to give their feedback.
- Locally, Scott Owen and Abbi Thorpe have joined the Cathedral Safeguarding Team and an independent chair, Will Wright, has been approved and appointed. Will is currently on the Diocese Safeguarding Panel and professionally he is an advisor to Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership. Next meeting May 27<sup>th</sup>.
- The Safeguarding Team will analyse the responses to the Cathedral Safeguarding Questionnaire in May. Commenting on the Questionnaire, members of the Forum noted that the Cathedral community is good at handling incidents, and that 'Ask Angela' is a good model to follow.
- Safeguarding questions come up every day. This does not mean that there are more problems, it reflects the expanding nature of Safeguarding, which increasingly includes issues to do with wellbeing. Every concern is taken seriously, and S-JA seeks advice from the Diocese as needed to ensure that correct procedures are followed.
- In July INEQE will carry out an audit of a survey and they will return in October to go into questions more deeply.

## 6. Dean's Report

Canon Katy Cunliffe will be moving into the Precentory on 19 May in preparation for her Installation on Sunday 1 June at 3.30pm Everyone is invited to come and welcome her and her husband Ben.

**Canon Mark Haworth** has been covering Precentor duties since the autumn and it's been a busy period. After handing over Canon Katy, he will leave on 30 June to go to St Paul's Cathedral as Acting Succentor for three months before returning in September as Cathedral Chaplain. Pilgrimage, St. Benedict, and relations with other organisations may form part of his role description.

**St Edmund reborn.** The consultants' work is coming to fruition.

- Purcell, the lead consultants, are moving on to the technical drawings that will be included in the next part of the application. These include solutions for moving from the Anselm building to the Cloister, the access ramp to the choir, and the new south door.
- On 15 May, JH and project manager James will go to the Commission for the Fabric of the Cathedrals of England (CFCE) in London to answer questions on the plans.
- Interpretation designers RFA Designs are working on how to tell the story from Edmund through Canute, the Abbey, the Reformation and on to today. Two themes emerge:
  - Edmund as a cultic hero, a young king who gave his life for his faith; Who are your heroes?
  - People came to the Abbey to be near the body, the "holy bones miracles".

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Another consultant Robin Sullivan has been drawing up activity plans for various groups and all ages. These plans are part of the National Heritage Fund main application to be submitted in February.

**Fundraising.** People have been enormously generous. From the launch on 20 March, we expected to reach 60% of our goal at this stage, but we have already reached 82%. Contributions have come from the Cathedral community, from Suffolk, friends and organisations, with some large donations.

**Deanery building.** The Deanery has been gutted and is on track to be finished in time for JH to move in on 2 June, ready for entertaining!

**Chapter minutes.** No comments.

## 7. Financial Report

Caroline Rouse gave a financial report.

2025 has got off to an encouraging start.

- For the first quarter we had a deficit of £45,000
  - against the budget deficit for this period of £58,000
  - last year at this time we had a deficit of £96,000

Income so far this year is £397,000

- £23,000 below budget but above last year by £76,000
- the main concern is a fall in visitor income.

We are adding two more welcomers to the team and also organising training

Expenditure is £443,000

- Better than the budget by £35,000 but worse than last year by £25,000.
  - The principal 'saving' is the interest cost on a loan for the refurbishment of the Deanery following the sale of the Crown Street property.
  - But concerns remain as to whether utility costs have been budgeted for adequately.

In a recent survey of all cathedrals, 73% of respondents are expecting a deficit this year.

- Our budget is a break-even budget and we are striving to achieve that.
- Salary costs are our biggest expense, at 51%, against an average of 49%.
- We rely hugely on our volunteers and have around 300 volunteers (like most cathedrals).

CS asked for volunteers to help count the weekly collections.

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- It is concerning that visitor income is down more than visitor numbers, now that we have paid welcomers, but it was noted that the welcomers paid for by the Cathedral Sustainability Fund.
- Should one be asking for donations on the way in or the way out of the Cathedral?
- Once the Dean has moved into the Deanery, the West Wing will be painted and put up for rent.
- In the accounts, the cost of fund raising appears to be more than the funds raised. CS explained that in our accounting system other cost lines appear under costs of fund raising.
- In addition to the full accounts, CS proposed that summary management accounts are presented at the APCM, with income and expenditure lines that are easier to understand.
- KF pointed out that the first quarter is always quiet and then income starts to rise again through the summer.

## 8. Welcoming

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MV had sent out a short paper about the possibility of increasing the number of welcomers for the 10.30 Choral Eucharist on Sundays. The purpose of this suggestion was to make sure that newcomers felt welcomed into the Cathedral and to take pressure off the Churchwardens and Deputy Churchwardens just before the service starts.

It was emphasised that this idea was in no way criticising the current team but was suggested more as a backup and second tier.

PB suggested that this might be better at the end of the service when people are leaving. KR suggested that, at the President's welcome at the beginning of the service, perhaps he or she could encourage regular members of the congregation attending coffee to find somebody they do not know to talk to, as this can sometimes be quite a forbidding time for newcomers.

MV said that this matter would be discussed at the upcoming wardens meeting on 1 June.

## **9. AOB**

MV drew attention to the new music sheet being produced, which is a leaflet in A5 format. This format is more efficient to produce.

## **10. Next Meeting**

The next Forum meeting dates for 2025 are Tuesday 23 September and Tuesday 25 November.

The meeting closed at 7.50 p.m. with the Grace.