

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Canon Matthew Vernon, Very Rev'd Joseph Hawes, Canon Katy Cunliffe, Canon Mark Haworth, Barbara Pycraft, Robert Lant, Sandra Lant, Judy Broadway, Margaret Wheeldon, Liz Rowlands, Sue Cockram, Kierstan Foreman, Valerie Moore, Dan Soper, Catherine Walsh, Simon Waters, Chris Andrews, Steve Jones, Pam Pitts, Doreen Young, James Stark, Katherine Wright, Sarah-Jane Powell.

1. Opening Prayer and Welcome

MV began the meeting with a short reading from Romans 12 and an opening prayer. MV welcomed Katherine Wright (Fundraising Manager) to her first Forum meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Katie Robson, Caroline Rouse, James Mansfield, Fiona Knapp, Penny Bentley, Abbi Thorpe, Alice Robertson, Terry Stark, Liz Steele.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as circulated.

4. Forum membership

A couple of updates to the Forum membership list were noted: adding Canon Mark Haworth to the Cathedral's licensed clergy and removal of "Young" from Fiona Knapp's role title.

To re-instate (following the revision of Forum's Terms of Reference) the rotation of around a third of Forum members each year, it was agreed that 5 or 6 members of Forum will step down voluntarily ahead of the 2026 APCM. They will be eligible for re-election and beginning a new 3 year term. Abbi Thorpe, Sue Cockram, Margaret Wheeldon, Valerie Moore, and Simon Waters are willing to step down in this way - to be confirmed in due course.

5. Safeguarding

S-JP thanked everyone who contributed to the questionnaires and interviews for the INEQE audit in October. We have made progress since the SCIE audit. The early feedback from INEQE included how our workforce (staff and volunteers) is welcoming, inclusive and supportive, and our worship is welcoming, inclusive and respectful. Overall, our governance is very good, particularly the chairing of Chapter meetings shared between the Dean and the Senior Non Executive Member, a model which most other Cathedral haven't adopted.

Feedback on the music department and work with young people was good; communicating with young people and parents is a strength. Posters and communication e.g. safeguarding tips in the bulletin were commended. Our work with Special Educational Needs young people was also commended.

The audit recommendations will be clear in the draft report in December and then published in January. Our COO (Chief Operating Office) and Safeguarding Officer are currently the same person. We are recruiting a part-time safeguarding officer to start in January to give us the extra capacity we need to ensure ongoing safeguarding delivery and improvements. They will work 20 hours flexibly, including evenings and weekends to connect with all members of the community. This will be funded

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by central church funding. Also, we are advertising for a non-executive Chapter member with safeguarding expertise.

The Dean commended the huge amount of work, document processing and planning that S-JP and Drew Parnell put into the preparation for the audit. The Dean highlighted that some Cathedrals have opted not to appoint their own safeguarding officer and stick with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer provision.

6. Dean's Report

Abbey of St Edmund Reborn project update

It is a very busy stage of the process, including the “permissions stage” with applications for permission from statutory bodies such as the Commission for the Fabric of the Cathedrals of England and the Local Authority. All the design consultancies (business plan, activities plan, interpretation plan, etc.) will be finalised for the main application to NLHF at the end of February. The Stage I review recently with our NLHF senior investment manager and independent consultant went well with a “steady as she goes” outcome.

Fundraising is going well and taking up much of the Dean's diary. The Rotary Club of Bury St Edmunds Abbey dinner in the Cathedral last week raised a good sum with the Reborn project one of four charity recipients. The Dean is approaching local businesses hoping to recruit ten as donors to join the “1327 Club”, 1327 being the year the town rose up against the Abbey and destroyed the abbey gate. Business donations will be part of a relationship between the Cathedral and those businesses. The Dean is working with other local leaders to develop ideas to improve employment opportunities for young people.

High net worth individuals in Suffolk are well protected by their people!

75% of the funding must be pledged by the application deadline in February. Then we'll hear if the outcome of the main application in the Summer of 2026. After that it's a two year delivery process. Archaeology has not yet revealed anything of great excitement.

Chapter is committed to The Yard project which is currently housed where the new wing of cloister will be built. The Yard activities already take place in the garden of Abbey Precincts and provision there is being explored.

Cathedral Chaplain areas of ministry

MV highlighted how good it is to have Canon Mark Haworth now as our Cathedral Chaplain and named the main areas his role will cover as part of working closely with clergy colleagues, staff and volunteers. The main areas are coordination of the Cathedral Chaplains, development of pilgrimage to the Cathedral, provision of materials/guides on faith for visitors to the Cathedral, assisting the provision of Communion in Care Homes for which the Cathedral has responsibility, and assisting in the provision of Pastoral Offices (baptisms, weddings, funerals, memorial services, burial of ashes). Mark responded with gratitude for the opportunity and highlighted the Benedictine heritage of the Cathedral which he has a particular interest in.

The challenge of space for private prayer in the Cathedral was named by RL. The Lady Chapel is the space allocated, but it remains a thoroughfare as visitors move around the building.

Sound system news

The creaking sound system is irritating both for the vergers operating the system as well as congregations. Before Christmas the system will be tweaked and then in January more significant work will take place so that hopefully the system is operating well ahead of the enthronement of Bishop Joanne on 24 January. Replacing old underfloor cabling and microphones, as well as a full

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survey of the speakers will be part of the work. The Head Verger requested patience and understanding in the meantime.

Chapter minutes July and October meetings

PP asked about the future of the Cathedral car park within the Abbey Reborn project. The Dean stated there will be spaces available for people with restricted mobility. The Dean highlighted:

- the excellent work of our still relatively new Canon Precentor.
- the end of Archdeacon Sally Gaze's ministry as Archdeacon for Rural Mission on 11 January, appropriately Plough Sunday.
- our new Chapter member is Neil Parsons who previously served as Chapter Steward (COO) at Norwich Cathedral.
- the solar panels are coming! A bat survey has been completed as part of that project.
- Philip Orchard, Cathedral Architect, is retiring after many years of excellent service. There was a strong field of applicants for his successor and an excellent appointment was made. That is being confirmed through the necessary procedures before an announcement.
- interviews for a Chaplain at King Edward VI School took place today.
- on Advent Sunday morning, the new Advent Wreath, wrought in metal by Steve Jones, will be blessed and hung for the first time in the Tower nave arch.

7. Financial Report

S-JP gave a financial update in Caroline Rouse's absence.

As of 31 October, we have achieved 83.6% of the budgeted income and incurred 81.5% of the budgeted expenditure. Cashflow has been very tight, but £82,612 received in legacies have helped. Budget holders have managed costs very well. Cathedral Enterprises are having another excellent year. The negative variance in income verses budget is projected from planned giving, patrons, visitors and events although with the legacies, a surplus of £32k is currently expected at year end. The Dean emphasised Chapter's priority of transferring legacies to reserves. Legacies given for specific purposes are ringfenced and put into designated funds.

8. New Fundraising Manager – Sarah-Jane and Katherine Wright

KW expressed appreciation for the commitment to the Cathedral she has seen in all people she has met in her first five days. KW shared a little about her career so far. KW will be running the Patrons Scheme and managing legacies, as well as working with the welcoming team around visitor donations and Planned Giving. KW will help departments with applications for fundraising. She is looking forward to implementing systems and using databases.

9. St Edmundsbury Primary School Governor update

Postponed until next time as Alice Robertson is unwell.

10. 2026 meetings: 3 February, 13 May, 22 September, 24 November

11. AOB

MV announced that representatives of the four charities selected by Forum for Cathedral giving are coming to the Cathedral tomorrow for a group photo.

The meeting closed 7.33 p.m. with the Grace.