

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



CHAPTER MINUTES

Minutes of the 252nd Chapter Meeting
Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 1.00 pm
Chapter Room

- Present:**
- The Very Rev'd Joe Hawes, Dean (JPH)
 - The Rev'd Canon Katy Cunliffe (KC)
 - Sue Hughes (SH)
 - Canon Dr Victoria Johnson (VJ)
 - Neil Parsons (NP)
 - Mark Pendlington, Co-Chair (MP)
 - Barbara Pycraft (BP)
 - Terry Stark (TS)
 - Paul Torrington (PT)
 - The Rev'd Canon Matthew Vernon (MV)
 - Jane Haviland Webster (JHW) *via Teams*
- In Attendance:**
- Stewart Alderman (SA)
 - Caroline Rouse (CRo)
 - Sarah-Jane Powell (SJP)
 - Sabrina Crooks (SaC)
 - Erin Seligman (Clerk to Chapter)

1. Opening Prayers

- 1.1 The Dean (JPH) opened the meeting with prayer.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Archdeacon Sally Gaze.

3. Conflicts of Interest

- 3.1 Chapter was made aware of Sue Hughes' recent appointment to the West Suffolk College Board.

4. Notification of AOB (No other business raised.)

5. Correspondence (No correspondence received.)

6. Sustainability

6.1 Racial Justice

- 6.1.1 Chapter welcomed Sabrina Crooks (SaC), chair of the Diocesan Racial Justice Committee, who spoke of stereotypes, unconscious biases and the need for environments where it is safe to be different and vulnerable.
- 6.1.2 Even one degree of change, followed by another degree of change and so forth can eventually lead to a monumental cultural shift that is relational, accountable and transformational.
- 6.1.3 SaC encouraged Chapter to review how and where the Cathedral is recruiting staff and committee members and make active attempts to diversify. She noted the lack of diversity on Synod, Bishop's Council and even within this Chapter Room is not representative of the

area. **Action:** The Cathedral's recruitment packs will be forwarded to SaC for review and feedback as to why existing wording inviting people from diverse backgrounds to apply has not been successful. Advice on where to extend the recruitment area will also be sought.

- 6.1.4 Chapter did adopt the One in Christ Jesus Manifesto a few years ago, but little has been done to take this forward. Conversations will commence to act on the aims within this manifesto. Individuals will also be tasked with reflecting on today's conversation and challenging Chapter to enact opportunities to create a cultural shift.

6.2 The Abbey, Reborn Project

- 6.2.1 Chapter received the minutes of recent Project Board meetings and JPH provided a brief update. The National Lottery Heritage Fund conducted a mid-term review, affirmed the direction of travel and allowed plans to continue with funding assured until the end of the development phase.
- 6.2.2 On 23 October, the Cathedrals Fabric Commission (FAC) formally accepted principals of the fabric capital, adaption and restoration works. Raised questions re: materials used in the construction of the Welcome Centre extension and location of air source heat pumps will need to be addressed.
- 6.2.3 The Activity Plan was delayed due to a staffing change, but is now being completed by the Business Planner.
- 6.2.4 A meeting with the FAC went well last week. There are some minor details still to work out re: materials used for the Visitor Centre.
- 6.2.5 The communications plan is also going well and the public exhibition recently held at the Cathedral will now travel across Suffolk. A micro-website dedicated to the Abbey, Reborn project will be launched soon.
- 6.2.6 The local government overhaul brings many unknowns and has been added to the project Risk Register. West Suffolk Council has indicated the authority change will not put the project at risk.
- 6.2.7 Recent discussions to develop a CIO partnership agreement to operate long after the project's development phase concludes and hold liabilities went well and was met with positivity.

6.3 Finance

- 6.3.1 Caroline Rouse (CRo) circulated and summarised the Management Accounts for the month of September. She reported the Cathedral performed reasonably well for the first three quarters of the year and a legacy received in September, followed by another in October, has turned the forecast for 2025 from a deficit to a surplus.
- 6.3.2 All areas are managed well and there is little scope to address the deficit through reducing the Cathedral's costs as there is very little expenditure that can be trimmed.
- 6.3.3 A drop in Stewardship and Planned Giving remains a concern and the incoming Fundraising Manager will have much to immediately address when she arrives.
- 6.3.4 The tap boxes have recorded a slight uptake in donations. The new Visitor Experience Manager is doing good work and CRo anticipates further improvement.
- 6.3.5 Events have been going well and the Christmas Market and Beer Festival in particular are bringing in a significant amount of income for the Cathedral. Fatigue growing for some types of events remains a concern.
- 6.3.6 Cash flow is satisfactory, although some funds are designated for the Cathedral's reserves.
- 6.3.7 CRo has determine previous Income Generation Group meetings, which involved a wide array of staff members, were not the right approach. More direct, one-to-one meetings are now held to review income generation streams and action plans for improvement.
- 6.3.8 The Dean has written to the Electoral Roll and asked them to enrol within the Planned Giving scheme. Efforts are underway to determine the actual percentage of people on the Electoral Roll who are not in Planned Giving (taking into account those within the same

household). Those within Planned Giving will receive a thank you letter within their Christmas Card from the Dean, as well as a springtime newsletter.

6.3.9 The new Legacy leaflets were launched on 2 November. Received legacies support the Cathedral's sustainability and are designated for the long-term investment fund. A certain level of flexibility is needed however, as Chapter may consider utilising reserves to underwrite the large-scale events needed for sustainability. Such events would be selected wisely to avoid risks and ensure the Cathedral recoups the seed money and makes a profit.

6.4 2026 Budget

6.4.1 The Cathedral's budget for 2026 is a net deficit of £58,758. Finding ways to further reduce costs has been challenging.

6.4.2 CRo reviewed the main variances from the current year, to include:

- an increase in revenue from the Beer Festival and Christmas Market
- an application for Church Commissioner funding of up to £40k for the Chief, Operating Officer and Chief Finance Officer posts,
- increased income from Planned Giving and visitors,
- Anticipated income from legacies reduced to £20k,
- Halting of the National Lottery Heritage Fund grant towards staff costs until the delivery phase of the Abbey, Reborn project begins,
- Loss of grants for Vicars Choral,
- The ceasing of a commercial property lease,
- Three-percent inflation in staff salaries,
- A conservative Enterprises budget,
- The bringing forward of some works earmarked for 2026 into the 2025 budget.

6.4.3 The projected deficit is below the £93k forecasted by the Project Narthex and reflects some aspiration for next year's budget.

6.4.4 Eco improvements as discussed by the Eco St Eds Committee are included in the budget.

6.4.5 Chapter discussed plans to improve the Cathedral's sound system, which could cost as much as £50k. Terry Stark (TS) said the need for this upgrade is such the Cathedral community may be happy to help cover the costs.

6.4.6 Architect fees for the quinquennial inspection will likely be higher than forecasted. The inspection will bring additional fees as well.

6.4.7 CRo proposed increasing budgeted income from Enterprises and Liturgy (weddings and funerals) to add further income to the 2025 budget. The Canon Precentor (KC) said the liturgy budget is calculated by what is booked into the 2026 diary. Funerals are unknown but will likely have little impact on the budget. Chapter **agreed** to keep the Liturgy budget as is. The Enterprises Board would have to approve any budget increases.

6.4.8 PT proposed accepting the 2026 Budget as is. Barbara Pycraft seconded the motion and Chapter unanimously **agreed** to accept the 2026 Budget. Chapter thanked CRo and her team.

6.5 Buildings and Property Update

6.5.1 Chapter received the Cathedral Architect's report. Outside funding has been secured for repairs to the Lady Chapel ceiling. Options for the outward opening of the west doors will be discussed at tomorrow's FAC meeting.

6.5.2 Chapter received and **agreed** to plans for a ramp to the Quire, as well as designs for the handrail and gate. The plans have gone through multiple reiterations and have been thoroughly reviewed and accepted by the FAC.

6.6 Eco St Eds

6.6.1 Chapter received minutes from the 13 October 2025 Eco St Eds Committee meeting.

6.6.2 There were no updates available re: the Solar Panel project.

- 6.6.3 Jane Haviland Webster (JHW) will be meeting with an individual who has expressed interest in joining the Eco St Eds Committee.
- 6.6.4 The Committee is working closely with the Abbey, Reborn project and environmental groups within the community and Diocese.
- 6.6.5 The Diocese has passed a new environmental / net zero policy of which the Cathedral can build on.
- 6.6.6 Efforts continue on the A Rocha application, and the Eco committee is networking with other cathedrals who have achieved the gold award.
- 6.6.7 Chapter **endorsed** Eco St Ed's decision to have JHW serve as chair. Aruna Stannard (AS) was appointed as the Committee secretary.

6.7 Safeguarding

- 6.7.1 The INEQE audit was positive. Auditors conducted 88 interviews and reviewed more than 300 documents and 600 surveys. The Cathedral was applauded for having a positive culture and the majority of those surveyed felt safe here. Most staff and volunteers described the Cathedral as welcoming, inclusive and supportive. The majority of the congregation described the Cathedral as welcoming, inclusive and respectful.
- 6.7.2 Initial learnings from the INEQE audit include the need for a standalone Safeguarding Officer. Recruitment for this post will begin soon, ahead of a January start date.
- 6.7.3 A Chapter trustee with professional safeguarding experience will also be recruited.
- 6.7.4 The Cathedral's governance, particularly the practice of having Chapter meetings co-chaired by the Dean and Senior Non-Executive Member, received favourable responses. A suggestion to have a non-executive trustee review each Chapter meeting will be added to the agenda, from today.
- 6.7.5 The auditors were equally impressed with the Music Department, but have suggested increased security measures (CCTV cameras, etc.) be added within the Song School and Learning Hub. Such improvements will be included in the 2026 budget.

7. Dean's Report

- 7.1. Chapter received a written report from the Dean.
- 7.2 The Dean is meeting with members of Green King's board of directors re: future plans for their current site once the brewery is relocated outside of town.

8. Mission

8.1 Music and Worship

- 8.1.1 Chapter was asked to note the time change of the Princess of Wales Carol Service. Mark Pendlington (MP) thanked Canon Katy Cunliffe (KC) for successfully organising the carol service in a short amount of time.
- 8.1.2 The organ scholar appointment was not successful as the candidate has resigned from post. The Music department is currently reviewing recruitment procedures and will amend the process as needed. Applications for next year's scholar are promising, and KC is cautiously optimistic of making a successful appointment.

8.2 Living in Love and Faith

- 8.2.1 Chapter **agreed** to endorse an open letter from members of the Church of England who are deeply disappointed by recent decisions of the House of Bishops re: Prayers of Love and Faith. The Cathedral community will be encouraged to sign the letter as well. **Action:** JPH to inform the Bishop of this decision.

9. Minutes and Reports

9.1 Chapter received the Chapter Minutes

9.1.1 The Chapter and Confidential minutes from the 6 October 2025 meeting were amended and approved.

9.1.2 Neil Parsons (NP) left the meeting at 3.05 pm.

9.2 Matters Arising

9.2.1 The skills audit will be reviewed ahead of recruiting new Chapter members.

9.2.2 KC completed the Association of English Cathedrals' Chapter training as part of her induction.

9.3 Chapter received minutes from the 14 October Nominations Committee meeting.

9.4 Chapter received the minutes from the 13 October Risk, Audit and Review Committee meeting.

10. Confidential Items

11. Upcoming Chapter Meeting Dates

11.1 The next Chapter meeting will be held Wednesday 4 February, 3.00 pm.

12. Review of Meeting

12.1 Sue Hughes (SH) reflected on today's meeting, particularly the discussions around inclusivity and the Abbey, Reborn project. Such conversations help solidify the open and trusting relationship of trustees. SH noted the importance in maintaining open dialogues, particularly with the Abbey, Reborn project underway, and called for flexibility for Chapter to address and resolve issues that may arise between meetings.

12.2 At the Dean's invitation, SaC also reviewed today's Chapter meeting and noted the pressure on trustees to be wise and good stewards. She applauded Chapter's decision to endorse the letter in support of Living in Love and Faith. This push for a truly hospitable church is critically important with recent attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion across the world.

The Chapter meeting concluded with prayer at 3.18 pm.