

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



CHAPTER MINUTES

Minutes of the 254th Chapter Meeting
Thursday 12 March 2026 at 10.00 am
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 (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: Caroline Rouse (CRo)
Sarah-Jane Powell (SJP)
Stewart Alderman (SA)
Frank Shippam, MA Partners LLP (FS)
Christine Stokes (CS) *via Teams*
Erin Seligman (Clerk to Chapter)

1. Opening Prayers

1.1 The Dean (JPH) opened the meeting with prayer and welcomed Frank Shippam (FS) of MA Partners LLP.

2. Apologies for Absence (All present.)

3. Conflicts of Interest (No conflicts of interest reported.)

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

5. Correspondence

- 5.1 Chapter received a resignation notice from Bridget Tuck (BT), who will end her 30-year employment at the Cathedral on 30 June.
- 5.2 BT to receive a long-service award and proper farewell during the Staff, Chapter and Committees of Chapter Garden Party on 16 August. Invitations to be circulated shortly.
- 5.3 Mark Pendlington (MP) and JPH are exploring how to appropriately mark BT's service.

6. The Dean's Report

- 6.1 JPH circulated a written update.
- 6.2 The new Bishop will be following due processes and methodical approaches to procedures and decision making. She is currently reviewing how the Diocese recruits, trains, authorises and supports LLMs, a positive and well-received workstream.
- 6.3 Mark Pendlington (MP) has notified the Bishop of his intention to step down as the Senior Non-Executive Member of Chapter upon his appointment as Lord-lieutenant. A preferred successor has

declined the position. The SNEM is appointed by the Bishop and JPH suspects Bishop Joanne will want to initiate an open recruitment process.

7. Sustainability

7.1 Annual Report and Financial Statements

- 7.1.1 Frank Shippam (FS) of MA Partners LLP presented a brief overview of the received Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 December 2025. Some minor corrections and small amendments to the narrative still to be made but no major changes are required ahead of Chapter approval.
- 7.1.2 No significant matters came from the audit report. Identified low risks as noted in the Management Letter have been addressed.
- 7.1.3 Following last year's discussion re: going concern status, FS directed the Committee to Page 28 which cites that Chapter "is aware reserves are below the level it deems appropriate for sustainability and is taking steps to address this" (e.g. the Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn project). The Cathedral currently has £78k in free reserves, compared to the target of £96k. However, free reserves have increased by £10k from the year before. Due to this increase auditors are happy to release a positive report with no indication of concern.
- 7.1.4 Total expenditures of £2.7m resulted in a deficit of £10,712 before property revaluations and other recognised gains/losses, compared to a deficit of £59k in 2024. Of this figure, £8,501 relates to restricted funds and therefore not part of the operating budget. The net deficit for unrestricted funds is £2,211, although this figure does include some designated funds.
- 7.1.5 Cash flow improved in 2025, thanks in part to increased rental income.
- 7.1.6 Key differences in the 2025 Annual Report compared to the year prior relate to the impact of the Abbey, Reborn project. Properties have also been revalued with fixed assets now topping £1.5m.
- 7.1.7 The Cathedral's budget will be overwhelmed by the Abbey, Reborn project if the second round of funding is approved. Clarity will be needed to keep eyes on the Cathedral's underlying budget and maintain normal flow of income and expenditure. Caroline Rouse (CRo) confirmed the Finance Department has sufficient support and good processes to manage the increased cashflow, but the situation will be monitored and added to the Risk Register. Chapter acknowledged their reassurance having the Chief Finance Officer in post to manage the finances of the Abbey, Reborn project.
- 7.1.8 Following on comments at last year's APCM, CRo has readjusted the 'Income from Visitors' line to include all donations/collections (not just tour income).
- 7.1.9 CRo has made a £53k accrual for electricity costs related to a faulty meter, which has still not been fixed by British Gas. The figure is based on past usage.
- 7.1.10 Chapter received a Letter of Representation, which will be signed at the same time as the financial statements.
- 7.1.11 Both the Finance Committee and Enterprises Board have accepted the 2025 financial statements.
- 7.1.12 With minor corrections and typos noted, PT proposed and Sue Hughes seconded a motion to approve the 2025 Annual Report and Financial Statements. Motion unanimously **approved** by Chapter. JPH thanked FS, CRo and all those who helped deliver a smooth, exhaustive and diligent audit process.

7.2 Finance

- 7.1.1 CRo presented consolidated management accounts, a Managements Account Review and cashflow report for the month ending 31 January 2026. Income continues to hold up well thanks, in part, to events being scheduled earlier in the year. The Cathedral does remain

heavily dependent on Pilgrims' Kitchen for income. The reliance on the refectory's performance and impact should this income stream be lost was noted as a substantial risk.

- 7.1.2 CRo noted changes to the presentation of budget figures and the restructuring of the accounting system which will allow for proper reporting of designated and restricted funds. Of this report the only notable movement recently was within the Kagera Fund (i.e. service collection of £2,250 for Kagera). The Musical Instruments Fund of £47,030 is tied to instruments, but the remaining £100k in restricted and designated funds is cash.
- 7.1.3 The Committee received the minutes of the 3 February 2026 Finance Committee meeting.
- 7.1.4 The annual grant of £196k was received from the Church Commissioners in January. Of this, £150k was transferred into the CCLA deposit account. The Finance Department has since drawn £50k and further £50k instalments are scheduled for June and September. Given the accrued electricity bill (as noted above) a further £30k will need to be drawn from CCLA to cover costs.
- 7.1.5 A final claim is still to be filed for Abbey, Reborn related costs incurred during the development phase. FS left the meeting at 10.42 am.
- 7.2 **Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn Project**
 - 7.2.1 Chapter received the minutes of Project Board meetings held between October and January.
 - 7.2.2 Chapter received an update on fundraising targets, a fundraising strategy and hierarchy of giving.
- 7.3 **Buildings / Property**
 - 7.3.1 Chapter received Philip Orchard's final architect report. SJP was PO's point of contact and she will equally communicate with his successor, Alice Milligan, on a weekly basis.
 - 7.3.2 SJP provided an update on the Angel Hill flats. One flat will be vacant from 1 April and new tenants are being sought. All properties to be regularly inspected as per lease agreements.
- 7.4 **Eco St Eds**
 - 7.4.1 Planning consent for the solar panel project was received at the end of February. Jane Haviland Webster (JHW) to speak with the project lead re: installation timeline.
 - 7.4.2 Chapter **agreed** in principle with the idea for an Eco / Solar Panel Exhibition. JHW will speak with the Visitor Experience Manager re: a budget for the event.
 - 7.4.3 Chapter **approved** the revised 'green line' Cathedral precinct for use within the A Rocha Gold application.
 - 7.4.4 An additional five or six people are still needed to make it viable to book carbon literacy training.
- 7.5 **Safeguarding**
 - 7.5.1 The received Photographic Policy for Services and Events requires further amendments and will return to Chapter at a later date.
 - 7.5.2 Chapter **approved** the updated Safeguarding Strategy.
- 7.7 **Policies**
 - 7.7.1 Chapter approved the amended Smoking Policy.
 - 7.7.2 Chapter approved the On-Call Policy created to ensure consistency and fairness. Chapter thanked the Canon Precentor (KC) for provided the necessary research.
 - 7.7.3 Chapter paused for prayer and reflection.

8 Mission

8.1 Music and Worship

- 8.1.1 Chapter received KC's Worship and Music Report. An invitation to the 18 April County Service of Celebration to honour the retirement of Clare, Countess of Euston and welcome MP as the new Lord-Lieutenant of Suffolk will be circulated shortly.
- 8.1.2 The Organ Scholar candidate has withdrawn, but the Music Department's second choice has accepted the position.

- 8.1.3 A recent meeting of the Friends of the Cathedral Choirs was positive. KC has also arranged a further meeting with the FOCC's chair and secretary to better understand the group's operations and objectives.

8.2 Revised Master Plan

- 8.2.1 Chapter received and gave interim **approval** of the updated Master Plan. Introductions from the Bishop and Dean still to be added. Thanks were relayed to all those who contributed to this lengthy process.
- 8.2.2 As with the old version, a spreadsheet will be created to track actions for the heads of departments to ensure the Master Plan remains a living document and is regularly reviewed.
- 8.2.3 Chapter applauded the updated photos within the plan but requested more diversity.
Action: MV to follow up.

9 Governance

9.1 Risk, Audit and Review Committee

- 9.1.1 Chapter **approved** the appointment of Peter Havelock to the Risk, Audit and Review Committee.
- 9.1.2 Chapter noted as read a report received from the chair of the Risk, Audit and Review Committee as per Constitution statutes. Chapter thanked the chair for her impressive report.
- 9.1.3 Chapter reviewed the top risks for 2026. The Risk Register is a central core document within the Risk, Audit and Review Committee.

10 Minutes and Reports

10.1 Chapter Minutes

- 10.1.1 The Chapter and Confidential minutes from the 4 February 2026 meeting were amended and **approved**.
- 10.1.2 JPH and James Mellish have identified stops for their 'road show' across the county to bring awareness and build support of the Abbey, Reborn project. Road show dates to be circulated to Chapter.

10.2 Chapter received minutes from the 11 February 2026 meeting of the Health and Safety Committee and the Fire Risk Assessment.

10.3 Chapter received minutes from the 5 February 2026 meeting of the Friends of St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

10.4 Chapter received the minutes from the 2 February 2026 Information Protection Group.

11 Any Other Business

12 Confidential Items

13 Upcoming Chapter Meeting Dates

- 13.1 The next Chapter meeting will be held Thursday 23 April, 10.00 am.
- 13.2 Terry Stark (TS) gave her apologies for the next Chapter meeting.

14 Review of Meeting

- 14.1 JHW began her review of today's Chapter meeting by applauding the meeting, agenda, timings and receipt of papers in a timely manner, albeit a few last-minute submissions.
- 14.2 There is a danger of the opening prayer and welcome encroaching on the Dean's Report. The start of the meeting is a good time for Chapter to focus on their mission.

- 14.3 JHW called for more balanced discussion between the executive and non-executive members, increased time to hear from the residentiary canons and more critical and robust conversations.
- 14.4 Today's meeting did, at times, become too operational. Still, Chapter should be clear on the risks they are facing and walk the fine line of remaining strategic while still ensuring the Cathedral is operating well.
- 14.5 Recommendations to Chapter from the supporting committees to be highlighted better.

The Chapter meeting concluded with prayer at 11.56 am.