

# St Edmundsbury Cathedral



Minutes of the Vestry and APCM meeting held on 28 April 2026 at 6.30 pm

## Opening Remarks:

The Dean (JPH) opened the meeting with a warm welcome and prayer and thanked all those in attendance.

## Present:

There were 46 members of the Electoral Roll in attendance (names on file) alongside the following individuals: JPH, the Reverend Canon Matthew Vernon (MV), the Reverend Canon Katy Cunliffe, the Reverend Canon Mark Haworth, Tanya Dawson, Claudia Grinnell, Caroline Rouse, Frank Shippam, James Stark and Erin Seligman.

## Vestry Meeting

Election of Churchwardens: Terry Young (TY, formerly known as Terry Stark) and Barbara Pycraft (BP) were the only nominations received. The Dean called for any further nominations and when no other persons were put forth was delighted to declare TS and BP duly elected to serve for the next year. The Dean thanked TY and BP for their service and acknowledged the warden team's hard work and dedication.

Due to the Cathedral constitution / statutes, both TY and BP will be required to stand down as wardens after this final term and the search for their successors is already underway. Wardens are no longer required to sit on Chapter, making the position less onerous than in the past.

The Dean thanked TY for providing the wine for this evening's meeting and relayed collective congratulations on her wedding this past Saturday.

The Vestry Meeting concluded at 6.37 pm.

## Annual Parochial Church Meeting

1. Apologies: Apologies were received from 41 members of the Electoral Roll (names on file.)
2. Minutes: The minutes of the 8 April 2025 Vestry and APCM meeting were approved and signed into record by the Dean. There were no matters arising.
3. Electoral Officer: Electoral Officer Simon Waters was unable to attend today's meeting. On his behalf, MV reported that the Electoral Roll currently has 262 members, an increase of eight people from the year before. No one has been removed from the Roll since the last APCM.

4. To Elect Five Members of the Electoral Roll to Forum: Abbi Thorpe, Sue Cockram, Margaret Wheeldon, Valerie Moore and Simon Waters were duly elected to fill the five vacancies on Forum. Each will serve on Forum for a three-year term.
5. To Elect Up To Five Members to the Thingoe Deanery Synod: Due to the size of the Electoral Roll, four individuals can stand on the Deanery Synod. Michael Wilde (MW), Lorna Brook, Geoffrey House and Liz Steele were elected. MW is willing to stand down should another representative come forward. Please reach out if you are interested.
6. Representatives to Churches Together: Pam Pitts and Margaret Steavenson were thanked for their service, and both were duly re-appointed.
7. Representatives to World Day of Prayer Committee: Jane Leung and Mandy Alderman were duly re-appointed and thanked for their service.
8. The Cathedral's Annual Report was made available on the Cathedral's website, with the link emailed to all electoral members prior to this meeting. The Dean introduced Chief Finance Officer Caroline Rouse (CRo) and auditor Frank Shippam (FS) of MA Partners LLP.

FS highlighted his firm's role in scrutinizing all accounts and records to ensure what is reported is a true and fair reflection. The process for 2025 went smoothly and produced a clean audit. FS's presence at today's meeting was to give reassurance that the Cathedral's governance and finances are being managed by good stewards.

9. The Finance Report for 2025 was presented by CRo. A £7k surplus was budgeted, with an actual deficit of nearly £10k and a variance of £17k recorded. Considering expenditures totalled more than £2m, this small deficit is not material.

CRo spoke of the importance of legacies and thanked all those who remember the Cathedral in their will, while noting the significant impact two received legacies had on this year's budget. The Cathedral will begin to heavily promote its legacy programme. Regular sources of income (Patrons, Visitors and Planned Giving) were all lower than budgeted. CRo again thanked those supporting these various schemes and encouraged enrolment within the Planned Giving scheme as the Cathedral is dependent on goodwill and generosity.

Variances between the 2025 and 2024 accounts were mainly due to movements on designated and restricted accounts and a property evaluation. Having not been

undertaken for a number of years, the property evaluation resulted in a significant £1.5m uplift with assets now totalling more than £8m.

Following up from questions re: visitor income at last year's APCM, CRo confirmed some donations were erroneously reported under 'service collections.' CRo has realigned the visitor income, which totalled £146k in 2025 and £143k in 2024. The Welcome Assistants have taken part in a refresher training course and are doing well, with visitor income now increasing.

CRo has aimed to align expenditure and income within three distinct groups: Community (mission, music and liturgy), External Activities (enterprises and fabric) and Administration, which includes income from the Church Commissioners as well as staffing costs (plus admin support, e.g. printing, computing, training etc.) The challenge is to keep administration costs to a minimum while increasing the income from the other two areas.

Each month Chapter and the Finance Committee receive a detailed cashflow report to fully understand where the Cathedral stands financially as cash is key. Operating areas, including Pilgrims' Kitchen and the Shop, delivered a cash surplus of £104k. Number 3 Crown Street was sold for £450k (net of the Diocese's share), of which £381k was spent on the Deanery refurbishment and circa £135k was deposited with CCLA, leaving year end cash balances of £66,158. Other third-party funds include those received for the solar panels, the *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project and various expenditures.

CRo noted the challenging year ahead. A £58k deficit is projected and cash flow received early in 2026 is expected to be spent by year end. A three-prong approach is in place to address the deficit: work to recoup small amounts of money from every possible budget line; push to exceed the larger streams of income (events, enterprises and legacies); and move ahead with the *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project.

JPH spoke of the financial difficulties many cathedrals are enduring, particularly as the Church Commissioners' 2026-2028 national spending plan heavily focuses on safeguarding, clergy pensions, stipends and housing. Additional funding for the sustainability of cathedrals was not included. Still, stewardship here at the Cathedral is starting to move in the right direction and, if awarded, the *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project will bring opportunities to hold large-scale events and increase visitor numbers. As part of the project bid, a robust and resilient 5/10-year business plan was created and serves as a testimony to the Church Commissioners of our efforts towards sustainability. Aside from organising more events, the Cathedral's mission continues to be a place of welcome, warmth and inclusivity and, first and foremost, a place of worship.

The Cathedral has revamped its accounting system, and all budget holders now receive their own results each month, which aids cost controls. Every line of income is regularly reviewed. In conclusion, 2025 was a great year and CRo thanked everyone for their support.

Questions/comments were welcomed.

- Action: CRo to follow up on an enquiry re: Income Appeals and Fundraising.
- JPH confirmed the Cathedral does not pay a 'parish share' as the Church Commissioners cover clergy stipends (not the Diocese).
- The efficient accounting system and timely submission of the annual accounts was acknowledged and applauded.

## 10. The Dean's Report

JPH spoke of his optimistic nature and reflected on the Cathedral maintaining its core mission and offering the offices and Eucharist every day of the year. He also gave thanks for special services held this past year (e.g. Bishop's Enthronement, Princess of Wales Carol Service, Chrism Eucharist, weddings, baptisms, ordinations, etc.) as well as the receipt of the Bury Psalter, the recent Gabriela Roar performance and the various 'Messy' children's events.

JPH gave thanks for good governance, which continues to grow stronger, as well as the Cathedral's resilience to handle its finances, maintain tight control on expenditures and stretch every sinew.

He gave thanks for the Lent courses and lectures, for learning how to serve the county and diocese better, for the number of singers increasing, for more children clothed as choristers and for the growing attendance at Junior Church, the 9.00 am All-Age Eucharist and other activities. He was encouraged by the initial positive report the Cathedral received from the external INEQE audit and the arrival of the Cathedral's first standalone Safeguarding Officer.

The *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project is progressing and a delegation from the National Lottery Heritage Fund will be visiting the Cathedral on 12 May. A decision re: the second application is expected in June, although the result will not be made public for several weeks. JPH gave thanks for the incredible work of the project manager, James Mellish, and the many supporters who are helping the Cathedral raise the £2.5m in matched funding.

Finally, the Dean gave thanks for the support in this room, his clergy team, the new Cathedral Architect and Surveyor to the Fabric, and the warm welcome regularly received within the Vestry and by chaplains and volunteers. In a world that can be at times a dark place, the Cathedral continues to be a safe haven for humans and canines alike.

Safeguarding Officer Tanya Dawson (TD), in post since February, provided a brief introduction to safeguarding and read a section of the training handbook:

*'As the church, we are called to reflect the image of God in the world through being a compassionate presence to those who are vulnerable and suffering. We are called to defend and speak up for those unable to do so for themselves.*

*The Church is intended to be a place where men, women and children, including those who are vulnerable, find healing and wholeness. We are called to welcome and care for the oppressed, the marginalised, and the victims of injustice.*

*The Christian Bible reveals a God of compassion and mercy, who opposes injustice and who calls his people to protect those who are vulnerable. Safeguarding, as a result, is at the heart of a Christian expression of community and family. It is 'gospel work'.*

TD is the first standalone Safeguarding Officer at the Cathedral and brings 12 years of experience in social care. Her role includes overseeing all aspects of safeguarding, working with the Diocesan safeguarding team, identifying risks and embedding a culture of care, accountability and transparency. Additional updates as follows:

- Results from the independent INEQE Safeguarding Audit have been delayed but were promised to arrive by the end of April. Some recommendations have already been implemented (e.g. Safeguarding Officer and CCTV).
- DBS checks can now be done online. Please see TD if you have any questions or need assistance.
- Throughout the next year TD will develop how the Cathedral hears the voices of children and young people. She has already introduced herself to choristers and will be meeting with them again to gather their views of the Cathedral, any concerns and changes that could be made. Proactively listening is the cornerstone of a healthy culture.

Director of Music Claudia Grinnell reflected on another busy and exciting year, to include the installation of the precentor, Bishop's enthronement, concert at Snape Maltings, Bury Psalter service, Gabrieli Roar and Christmas services. She thanked Richard Cooke and Dan Soper, who both play the organ regularly, as well as the junior organ scholar, the St Edmundsbury Singers, back row, youth choir, choristers and their parents.

CG is a firm believer the regular pattern of service is the core mission of the Music Department, and she works to ensure a regular weekday Evensong is as good as a carol service broadcasted on the radio. CG and her team are consistently looking to raise the standards.

In 2025 40 new pieces were added to the repertoire, a substantial amount of new music to learn and CG credited the choristers for their hard work. New pieces have also been purchased or commissioned to ensure music by women is featured more regularly.

The four-week Summer Organ Festival will kick off next Sunday with the Prom, followed by *The Carnival of Animals*, a silent movie improvisation and the *Phantom of the Opera*. Suffolk Day celebrations will be held on 21 June, and the Cathedral has been hosting WOOFYT (Wooden One-octave Organ For Young Technologists) organ workshops at which children learn about sound.

A choir tour in Sweden has been organised, with the support of the Friends of the Cathedral Choir (FOCC) and the Vestey Trust. Acknowledging the overlaps of her presentation and that of JPH, CG said this hopefully shows how much the Dean and Chapter support the Music Department. She thanked them as well the entire Cathedral community for their commitment and presence at services and looks forward to another good year.

Head Verger and Events Manager James Stark briefly spoke of events which, as one of the key fundraising streams for the Cathedral, creates an incredible amount of work. He is fortunate to have a great verger team who support JS in his role as Events Manager. The diary is busy with events shoehorned in where possible. However, income from such events supports the worship and mission of the Cathedral.

Upcoming events to highlight include another FOCC Quiz Night later in the year, Suffolk Day, a Harvest Concert on 26 September (plus our regular Harvest Festival on 4 October), an art exhibition by Gina Long and a performance of Handel's *Messiah* by Wild Arts on 18 December.

JS looks forward to the rest of this year and already has many events planned for 2027. The development of the *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project will limit the Cathedral's ability to host some events, particularly those that utilise the Garth. Efforts are underway to fill any diary gaps with alternative events that could be held solely within the Cathedral.

## 11. Any Other Business

The Dean concluded the meeting with a brief but expanded look at the *Abbey of St Edmund, Reborn* project (transformation of the Anselm building, new cloister, creation of pathways to unite the Abbey site and development of activities to welcome the underserved).

The Cathedral continues to support the mission and ministry of the Diocese and is working to grow in number and welcome more young people and families.

The Sub Dean will soon depart for a well-earned sabbatical.

JPH again relayed thanks to all those who support the Cathedral, from gardeners, servers and flower arrangers to Shop volunteers, Lego builders and pastoral carers.

The organiser of a recent event called St Edmundsbury the friendliest cathedral and JPH hopes we never lose our warm, gentle welcome. As he approached his eighth year as Dean, he reflected on this wonderful Cathedral community, as well as colleagues who both support and tease, and confirmed he was pretty lucky indeed.

The meeting ended with the grace at 19:49 pm.