

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



Minutes of the Forum Meeting held on **Wednesday 13 May 2026** at **6.30 p.m.**

Present:

The Very Rev'd Joseph Hawes, Canon Katy Cunliffe, Canon Mark Haworth, Fiona Knapp, Terry Young, Penny Bentley, Judy Broadway, Sue Cockram, Kierstan Foreman, Valerie Moore, Liz Rowlands, Dan Soper, Abbi Thorpe, Catherine Walsh, Rosemary Austin, Alan Bond, Margaret Bond, Jo Dean, Charlotte Kreckler, Pam Pitts, Richard Summers, Liz Steele, Doreen Young, Tanya Dawson, Caroline Rouse, James Stark, Katie Robson.

1. Opening Prayer and Welcome

Terry Young, chairing the meeting, welcomed all those present. On the eve of Ascension Day, the Dean shared thoughts and a prayer written by Janet Nightingale "When we stand looking up".

2. Apologies

Apologies received from: Canon Matthew Vernon, Sarah-Jane Allison, Barbara Pycraft and Simon Waters.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2026

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

4. Finance update

Caroline Rouse gave a financial update on the first quarter of this year. This year we are budgeting for a £58,000 deficit. That figure assumed grant income from the Church Commissioners towards the cost of the COO and CFO. This is not going to be forthcoming, so with an additional £40,000 to pay, our deficit could be more in the region of £100,000.

The first quarter's income is £385,572, up £6,000 on the budget. We are pushing at every angle to try and increase income where possible to cover the above £40,000. On costs, we are a little under budget at this stage but are aware of the big item expenses:

Salaries up c.£30,000 this year, due to rises in the minimum wage and NI, and

Utilities, where we have a fixed contract with British Gas to the end of 2027 and we negotiated a three year extension last August to cover 2028–2030 and to secure a good price.

Net income and expenditure by area:

Net community – income from congregations and visitors covers expenditure on mission work, learning, liturgy and music. Visitor income is doing well. Planned giving and donations are not currently meeting aspirational targets.

External activities – income from Pilgrims Kitchen, commercial property and external trading is up. Overheads, including salaries, running costs, and computing, printing, etc. expenditure, are currently below budget due to good practice from the budget holders.

Cashflow is as to be expected. We started the year with £66,392, our net operating income is £102,500, our net investments stand at £110,000 (part of the CC's grant of £198k) with an additional £4,238 in restricted funds. With a net cash inflow for the three months of £11,730, our balance on March 31 was £54,662.

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On a question regarding the minimum wage, CRo confirmed that we pay the minimum wage (£12.71) rather than the living wage.

5. Safeguarding

Tanya Dawson gave a safeguarding report.

INEQE is reviewing the final draft of its report prior to publication. When received, it will be made freely available and will form the basis of our action plan.

The national safeguarding standards come from the Church of England, with a set of five benchmarks designed to assess quality and impact of our safeguarding activity:

- Culture leadership and capacity
- Prevention
- Recognising, assessing and managing risk
- Victims and survivors
- Learning, supervision and support

The standards as set out will enable us to identify our strengths and the areas for development which will inform our strategic planning in respect of safeguarding.

Comments and suggestions on how to allow people to share their views included:

- asking children what they think – choristers' girls/boys, junior church, teenagers,
- display and suggestion box on notice board in hallway by the refectory/loos,
- TD coming in on the Sunday,
- information at the main entrance and exit of the church,
- sharing information on the weekly bulletin sheet,
- the Congregation should know how to raise concerns,
- "If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't"
- QR code where people can find form and/or the contact details of the Safeguarding Officer

6. Dean's report

Abbey of St Edmund Reborn

All nine planning permission applications were given consent on Monday (May 11). Consent given without having to go to committee is a testament to all the work by James Mellish (JM), the project manager. A short film has been released (see website) explaining the project.

A delegation from the National Lottery Heritage Fund visited yesterday. After a presentation and tour, there was a budgetary discussion. JM was robust in defending our budget, which contains a 20% contingency. The application now goes before the East of England Committee and then to the National Committee. The National Committee meets on 24 June. Decisions and awards are made public three to four weeks later. We are hopeful that the application will be successful.

We have to raise £2.6m in matched fundraising. 85% of this has already been pledged. JH is meeting with local businesses, in particular Greene King, to discuss funding and possible extra carparking when they move off part of their town site. If we get the Lottery Heritage funding, we will run a big campaign to raise the final funds, going to grant-making trusts, local businesses and individuals to secure the final funds needed. JH and JM will be going on a road show across Suffolk to explain the project. Dates of this will be shared for those who would like to attend.

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RS, a professional planner, commended JM and the Project Board on their success in gaining planning permission and in preparing the numerous supporting reports for this and the NLHF funding application. He welcomed the unifying concept which had now been included to “unite the whole Abbey Area” as suggested by the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership. He noted that the Footpath Network, the Activity Plan and particularly the Business Plan would need further work.

JH explained that work is under way to form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) if the NLHF funding application is successful. It would act as a successor to the present Project Board and would unify the governance, management and improvement of the whole Abbey area in the legacy phase after the NLHF Project has been completed.

Weekly Bulletin review

KC Each week there is a paper bulletin and an electronic one that goes out on a Saturday evening. They are the same in terms of notices and service information. The electronic version has a weekly reflection and there are some minor differences.

KC asked for a 5 minute break-out discussion to voice likes, dislikes and suggestions. Feedback given and to be shared included:

Electronic bulletin:

- The email bulletin originally (in 2020) came out on Saturday at 8am, but this caused confusion when the notices talked about “Today”, meaning Sunday. Some people interpreted that as Saturday, so it was moved to Saturday night to help avoid that confusion.
- 3 x request to receive the e bulletin earlier on a Saturday i.e. perhaps 6pm not 8pm.
- Electronic bulletin only goes to those who have signed up. It helps people feel connected to the Cathedral if away. Good to read ‘views’ in the reflection.
- We all want to receive something by email.
- One person prints the bulletin each week for the notices (not sure if PDF or email version)

Paper bulletin:

- Seems the paper version has 2 distinct purposes: readings/prayers for the week, diary for the week ahead.
- Readings on the paper version are invaluable; also having music information is excellent.
- 2 x the print is too small plus some notices are too long. The font/info too small re: where to send info to.
- Large print notices useful for housebound/HC/some in congregation.
- Not sure if the paper version is given out routinely on Sunday mornings, or only on request.
- Paper version is hit and miss for those who might use it (for readings) i.e. hard of hearing, seating position, safe prop.
- Paper version does not have the reflection – not enough room.
- How many should be printed?

Content:

- 2 x Do we need Collect/PC prayer and readings on it? Should it just be news?
- Collect and PC prayer are needed for those who like to revisit.
- Readings on the paper version are invaluable.
- Having music information is excellent.
- Appreciate the written reflection, also as preparation for Sunday service.
- 2 x Reflection is too long/apposite/time-consuming for clergy?

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- Some of us like to see the preacher or music, etc. in the email in order to decide which service to come to.
- Are there too many notices? And too many external adverts?
- Don't repeat from the pulpit what's in the bulletin.
- Having that day's services is stale information, better to have next week's.
- Sunday only? Not big enough to contain what we need to know. Whole week at a view? Each day's events in date order.

To add:

- Sentence re who visiting choir are, e.g. who they are, where they are from, etc.
- Names of those being baptised, first communion and confirmation included in the bulletin.
- Is there info not there that would be useful?
- Do we also need a monthly/quarterly publication?
- Some of us didn't fully appreciate how much extra work it is to make it in two formats.
- Would like both paper and electronic to remain.

Suggestions for "Big matters for discussion"

JH asked for suggestions, which included:

- Future of the world of work. DY
- Resilience in young people. AT
- Gaps between Towns folk and Cathedral folk. RS
- Assisted dying. JH
- The rise of the far right, how to respond. AT
- Recognising and supporting mental health in all ages.

MB suggested using the Cathedral as a place of "send off" to support people taking up challenges, both small scale and large, as was done for the St Nicholas Hospice walk some years back.

The Lent course was only offered online this year, would it be possible to repeat last year's offering having it online and being able to come in for a lunchtime in-person session?

Charitable giving

Kierstan Foreman and fellow members of the Charitable Giving working group, MV, Judy Broadway and Sue Hughes, recommend that we support the four charities identified last year again:

- a) Eden-Rose Coppice Trust - <https://www.withnature.org/>
- b) ActivLives - <https://activlives.org.uk/>
- c) The Befriending Scheme - <https://www.thebefriendingscheme.org.uk/>
- d) YANA - <https://www.yanahelp.org/>

Following a short discussion, Liz Steele seconded by Sue Cockram, proposed that we support them: for the year 2026–27. This was passed unanimously.

There was a question as to whether we should make a longer commitment with the charities to aid their planning processes. KF will take that back to the working group for discussion going forward.

Chapter Minutes

There was a question regarding the roles of Patrons and Friends. JH and the Chapter are in the middle of a consultation to clarify these, working towards the Friends of the Cathedral being about the fabric, the Friends of the Cathedral Choir being about the music, and the Patrons supporting the general costs of the Cathedral.

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9.AOB

1. JH drew attention to the upcoming Friends of St Edmundsbury Cathedral Summer Evening of Music and Readings at Snape Maltings on Thursday 23 July. This is in support of the conservation of the Great West Window and also for our long-standing ambition to glaze the Great West Doors. Tickets are selling well. A coach is being arranged from the Cathedral and there will be a raffle at the event.

2. Tools with a Mission. Their mission is to collect and repurpose tools to send to Africa. They are working in Tanzania and we have sent tools out to Kagera through them. They are going to be in the Cathedral on Sundays over the next month to share their experiences and encourage us to donate unwanted tools. <https://www.twam.uk/>

3. Ascension Day service. There will be a joint Ascension Day service at St Mary's Church at 18.30 on Thursday 14 May. Everyone is encouraged to come. JH will be preaching. Refreshments back at the Cathedral.

4. Next meeting: 15 September 2026.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 19.47.