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**MEETING OF PARISHIONERS FOLLOWED BY THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL  
CHURCH MEETING**

**To be held at St Bartholomew's Church Orford**

**On Sunday 19th April 2026 at 12.15pm**

**The meeting starts with a prayer from  
The Rural Dean of the Wilford Benefice Rev Mandy Reynolds**

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**MEETING OF PARISHIONERS (ALSO KNOWN AS THE VESTRY MEETING)  
Sunday 19th April 2026**

***Note:** All those on the electoral roll of the parish and all persons who are entered on the register of local government electors are entitled to vote at this meeting.*

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer - Rev Mandy Reynolds
  2. Appointment of Clerk to the Meeting.
  3. Election of Churchwardens
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## ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING Sunday 19th April 2026

*Note: Only those on the electoral roll of the parish are entitled to vote.*

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Approved the minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting
3. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting
4. To receive the following reports
  - a. The Rural Dean and Rectors report
  - b. A report on changes to the Roll since the last annual parochial church meeting
  - c. The annual report under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018
  - d. The financial statements of the council for the year ending on the 31st December preceding the meeting
  - e. A report of the proceedings of the deanery synod (Jacki Maslin) [received]
  - f. Other matters of parochial or general Church interest
    - i. Church Wardens report
    - ii. Fabric report (Guy Marshall)
    - iii. Diocese Safeguarding report
5. The elections and appointments
  - a. Election of PCC members
  - b. Election of Deanery Synod Representative(s)
  - c. Appointment of an independent examiner
6. Any other business
7. Closing prayers

# St Bartholomew's Church Orford

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF PARISHIONERS  
FOLLOWED BY THE ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**  
held at **St Bartholomew's Church Orford** on **Sunday 6th April 2025** at **11.00am**

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## **MEETING OF PARISHIONERS (ALSO KNOWN AS THE VESTRY MEETING)**

*Note: All those on the electoral roll of the parish and all persons who are entered on the register of local government electors are entitled to vote at this meeting.*

### **Present**

Elizabeth Archer	James Kennedy	Suki Pearce
Peter Beaumont	Paula Kerr	Kim Puttock
John Bevan	Jacki Maslin	Rev Mandy Reynolds Rural Dean
Veronica Bevan	Nigel Maslin	Wendy Roberts
Susan Bridges	Guy Marshall	Judith Shallow
Jill Fullerton-Smith	Wendy Marshall	Nicola Smith
Caroline Gill	Penelope Murley	Rev Dr Stephen Thompson
Chris Gill	Richard Murley	Sally Walton
Diana Grayburn	Simon Murdoch	Christopher Wheeler
John Grayburn	Linda Orford	Andrew Wileman

### **1. Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Rev Mandy Reynolds

### **2. Appointment of Clerk to the Meeting**

Caroline Gill current PCC secretary was appointed Clerk to the meeting.

### **3. Election of Churchwardens**

There were two candidates for Church Warden.

Guy Marshall proposed by Diana Grayburn and seconded by Kim Puttock.

Diana Grayburn proposed by Caroline Gill and seconded by John Bevan.

All were in agreement with both proposals and both candidates were elected as Church wardens.

Jacki Maslin stepped down from the Church Warden post to concentrate on her role in the Diocese as a member of several committees. She was thanked for all her work.

**The MEETING OF PARISHIONERS ended at 11.14am.**

## **ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING**

Rev Mandy informed the meeting that only those on the electoral roll of the parish are entitled to vote at this meeting.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Fiona Raison  
Dr Nicholas Moore.

### **2. Minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting**

The minutes of the previous Annual Parochial Church Meeting were approved and signed as a true record.

### **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Reports**

Rev Mandy suggested that the reports be accepted en-bloc, after they had been provided. This was unanimously agreed by those present.

#### **Electoral Roll**

Kim Puttock's report is attached which confirmed that the Electoral roll stood at 53, one more than last year.

#### **The Rural Dean and Rectors report**

Rev Mandy said that while we had no Rector for the cluster that she had oversight and was "taking up the slack" in the benefice. In November she was made the rural Dean of the Woodbridge Deanery. In addition, there is currently no Bishop for the Diocese. Rev Mandy was working with the Archdeacon Rich Henderson and was enjoying getting around to the different churches.

The Team Rector post had been advertised twice and with no external applications. An internal candidate has applied, and an interview is to be held on May 13th.

Finally, Rev Mandy said that she was having talks with the Archdeacon and that there was a plan for the future and that team dynamics may change when the position is filled.

Rev Mandy thanked our retained clergy Dr Stephen, Robin, Judith and Dr Kevan and the Church Elders for holding the fort and taking services. She asked PCC members to ensure that our clergy were looked after and "didn't over-do it".

#### **Annual report PCC**

Caroline Gill outlined the position of the Church as a charity. She highlighted some of the activities held in the Church and the PCCs commitment to use of the building and for outreach activities in the community. She noted that normally during an interregnum service numbers went down but that in our case they had increased a little.

Thanks were given to all those who helped clean the Church, Nicola our paid cleaner, Robin and D Alderson who prompted a spring clean and Libby Archer who managed the brass cleaning. Thanks to the Flower team headed by Linda Orford who make the church look pretty. Richard Moody had revived the bell ringing tradition in Church and thanks to him we

now have a team and have hosted other bellringers. Thanks to the music team, Adrian our organist and the choir.

The Friends of Orford St Bartholomew (FOSB) have been raising funds for the Church, and we are most grateful to them for their fundraising and continued support. They have matched funded works on the roof and new bell ropes.

### **Treasurers report**

Andrew guided us through the figures. He explained that Bank balances were down £1.7K from the previous year with a £9K surplus from routine income and expenditure.

Concert income appeared low due to some invoices paid late but were in fact the same as last year.

Barts Hall donations from the Warm room and also some rental income meant that the Hall has actually made £2K in income.

Money out was £44.9K, down from £48.4K in the previous year.

As we were in deficit, the Parish Share payment was reduced from £26K to £21K.

There were 4 non- routine expenses in 2024.

The Friends contributed approx. £5K towards these costs and VAT was partially recovered so the final costs to the PCC were as follows:

- Quinquennial roof repairs cost £3.9K
- Buttress repairs £3.6K
- Bell ropes £0.9K
- Consistory Court Legal fees £5K

Non routine income:

- Donation £2K
- £1K towards court fees from Cobra Mist
- Sale of lighting chandeliers £1.1K

### **Church Wardens and Fabric report**

Guy Marshall reported that the church has no serious problems that need urgent attention. The displaced slates on the south side of the church roof were replaced and the finished work approved by our architect, Tim Buxbaum.

Curles of Snape attended the church and gave an estimate for the wiring remedial work. The details of this have been passed to the architect and a schedule of work will be produced.

The failed soakaways on the south side of the church, noted to be blocked in Feb 2023, have not yet been attended to and there are now three gullies that are not draining. The original faculty application for replacement, like for like, was returned and in September 2024, having asked the DAC for advice, a new plan for a linked system with collector chamber was suggested. Ker-Way, groundworks contractors, were asked to give an opinion and estimated cost for the project. The plans for the work and schedule are being prepared by our architect for submission to the DAC.

The radiators and old heating system were drained down to prevent any burst pipes and a faculty for the removal of them and the redundant oil tank will be sought.

The churchyard is well maintained and there are no concerns as the mowing season starts again.

### **Diocese Safeguarding report**

Rev Mandy read the safeguarding report written by Charlotte Gooch for the benefice.

Charlotte now has a formal role in the Diocese and Rev Mandy thanked her for her work.

### **Deanery Synod report**

*Woodbridge Deanery Synod Annual Report for 2024*

Jacki Maslin reported that the Synod met on three occasions.

On 8th February the Rural Dean, Revd Giles Tulk was to leave as Team Rector of Wilford Benefice at Easter. Discussions included 'the strategy for tiny churches, and the future organisation of the vacant benefices. 2023 had concluded with the Deanery reaching 92.5% of Parish Share.

On 6th June 2024 the elections to Diocesan Synod for our Deanery for laity were 3 from Woodbridge, 1 from Hollesley and 1 from Orford, yours truly. Burgh PCC submitted a resolution concerning the issue of the Church of England paying reparations for past involvement in slavery. This motion was passed on to the Diocesan Synod for debate and this past Diocesan Synod it was agreed upon by our members.

Our last meeting on 10th October 2024 the Diocesan Mission Enabler gave a presentation on support available to help churches grow.

Later in October Rev'd Mandy Reynolds was appointed Rural Dean and I was elected to Bishop's Council, Vacancy In See, Board of Patronage and later appointed to the Suffolk Archdeaconry Committee for Mission and Pastoral Care.

Following the receipt of the above reports, it was proposed by Diana Grayburn that they be accepted. This was seconded by John Bevan and approved en bloc by those present at the meeting.

## **5. The elections and appointments**

### **(i) Election of PCC members**

Dr Nicholas Moore was proposed as a member of the PCC by Jacki Maslin and seconded by Peter Beaumont and his election was approved by the meeting with 3 abstentions.

Nick Moore, who is a member the PCC in his Church in London, was welcomed and the PCC looked forward to meeting and working with him.

The current PCC members are:

Peter Beaumont

John Bevan

Jacki Maslin

Nigel Maslin

Kim Puttock  
Andrew Wileman

All were re-elected en-bloc.

- (ii) Appoint independent examiner  
Judith Golder was proposed by Jacki Maslin and seconded by Wendy Marshall . All were in favour,

**6. Any other business**

The Archdeacon would be holding a service for induction of New Church wardens on June 2nd at St Felix.

Rev Mandy talked about the restoration of the 8.00am BCP service at Orford and asked for a show of hands as to who would be keen. Majority were interested and it was proposed that this would start in May for a 6 month trial.

**The ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING closed at 12.08pm.**

## **Rural Deans Report 2025/26**

The Rural Dean attended both Deanery and Diocesan Synods where we welcomed Bishop Joanne and Diocesan Bishop and received the news of the election of the Bishop of London, Dame Sara Mullally as the 104<sup>th</sup> Archbishop.

The Rural Dean also attended a number of informative Rural Deans, Assistant Rural Deans and Lay Chairs "Away Days", which take place in various venues across the Diocese.

The Woodbridge Deanery Synod had 3 meetings last year, 2 held at St Felix Rendlesham and the other at St John's Woodbridge. Speakers during the past year have included Jane Sheet, Diocesan Director of Education who spoke about the value and importance of School Governors in our Cof E schools, Karen Galloway and Allison Baalham from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, Edward Creasy, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary. We also recently welcomed Rev'd Kate De Bourcier who talked about the revised Deanery/Benefice Mission Growth Plans and resources which are now available. The Rural Dean will be looking at setting a date post APCMs to look at putting a Deanery Mission Growth Plan together.

It has also been widely reported about clergy wellbeing as a concern due to increasing financial hardship due to pension changes and the lack of affordable retirement housing.

There has been correspondence reminding all Benefices/Deaneries that the Cathedral Team are open to invitations to officiate and/or preach at services across the Diocese, or to come and do specific talks.

Letters lobbying MPs were still being encouraged with regard to the loss of the VAT refunds for church buildings.

There is currently a consultation process taking place for the reshaping of the three archdeaconries. The Rural Dean and Lay chair have been involved in the first round of discussions and there will be a future meeting with deanery chapters and archdeacons.

The Deanery Chapter continues to meet occasionally, but with multi-parish benefices within the deanery, arranging chapter meetings with very busy incumbents is difficult. There is a chapter meeting due in the autumn and one in the autumn with the Archdeacon in attendance. In the interim a Rural Deans Quarterly Newsletter is produced and circulated to Deanery Clergy.

***Rev'd Mandy Reynolds***  
***Rural Dean for the Woodbridge Deanery***  
***April 2026***



## Team Rectors Report 2025/26

Following a successful interview process, Rev Mandy Reynolds was appointed to the position of Team Rector in May 2025, along with her continuing the role as Rural Dean for the Woodbridge Deanery. A move from the Vicarage in Rendlesham to the Rectory took place at the end of August, and the official induction and installation as Rector took place in St Batholomew's Church on the 4<sup>th</sup> September, officiated by Bishop Graham and Archdeacon Rich. In December 2025, the Revd Greg Gooch, curate to the Rendlesham Cluster, and his family, moved into the Vicarage. This has enabled him to be more central and accessible for the cluster.

There have been regular meetings with all Benefice clergy, including the PTOs and two curates, enabling services are covered and bringing new outreach initiatives, and also making sure all retired clergy do not overstretch themselves and ensuring that they have adequate support and resources. Sincere thanks go to them, also to Janet Bishop as Reader, and all Elders, for their continued efforts to keep our churches running, and that all pastoral events, (weddings, funerals and baptisms) are managed. Thanks also go for their continuing support and encouragement to the team rector.

Rev Mandy has also been kept up to date with all churchwardens meetings and plans, and has also has attended many PCCs across the Benefice. The Rector hosted two Christmas events , one for the fulltime/PTO clergy and their spouses, and one for all Benefice Churchwardens to thank them for their hard work over the past year. These will hopefully be repeated this coming festive season.

The Benefice continues to hold its own with the Parish Share, with most churches endeavouring to pay their share or what proportion of it they are able.

A number of smaller village churches continue to give cause for concern with dwindling and aging congregations, but there is often a positive way forward in keeping these churches open and their mission and outreach ongoing. Tunstall Church is a prime example of reaching out to the local community and seeing them taking responsibility for their church.

Also, a number of churches have been successful in their applications for grants from the Diocesan Mission Growth Fund, which has enabled more mission and outreach opportunities. More grant applications would be welcome and further information can be obtained from the Mission and Growth Team at Diocesan Centre.

The Archdeacons Visitation is planned for June 30<sup>th</sup> (7pm) at All Saints Church, Hollesley for the swearing in of Churchwardens for the year. There will also be church inspections taking place across the Benefice during the summer and autumn of this year, and these will be conducted by the Deanery Lay Chair, and/or the Rural Dean and Archdeacon Rich Henderson.

There will be a significant and historic service in the Church of St Felix on Sunday June 14<sup>th</sup> at 3pm when the church will be officially and legally signed over from Diocesan ownership to the Parish. All are welcome to attend. Refreshments will be served afterwards.

On Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2026, (Advent 3) Dean Joe from the Cathedral will be holding an Advent talk at The Church of St Felix, followed by light refreshments. Again, all are welcome to attend.

Once again, as Team Rector, I would like to thank everyone, in whatever capacity they offer service, and who helps to keep our churches open and reaching out to the villages and communities in order that we might further the kingdom of God in this part of Suffolk.

**The Revd Mandy Reynolds**  
**Acting Team Rector for the Wilford Peninsula Benefice**  
**APCMs 2025**

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## ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING ELECTORAL ROLL REPORT

5 APRIL 2026

### 1. Current Status

In accordance with the Church Representation Rules, the Church Electoral Roll has been revised annually in preparation for this APCM. The revision process began on 22 March 2026 and concluded on 4 April 2026, with the updated roll displayed for at least 14 days prior to this meeting.

### 2. Membership Numbers

- Number on the roll at the close of last year's APCM: 53
- Names removed during this year's revision: 1
- New names added during this year's revision: 4
- Total number on the Electoral Roll at the close of this revision: 56

### 3. Summary of Changes

This year, 4 new members have applied to join the electoral roll. We are sad to report that 1 name was removed, primarily due to death.

As this is a revision year rather than a preparation year (when a new roll is created), the existing roll was updated rather than scrapped and completely recreated.

### 4. Conclusion

The Roll now stands at 56 members. The full list of names (excluding address details for GDPR compliance) is available for inspection in the church.

I would like to thank Diana Grayburn for assisting with the administration of the roll this year.



**Kim Puttock**  
Electoral Roll Officer ([secretary@stbartschurchorford.org.uk](mailto:secretary@stbartschurchorford.org.uk))  
St Bartholomew Orford Church

Bank balances at 1 Jan 2026 were £120.9K, up from £97.4K a year ago. This represents a surplus for 2025 of £23.4K; excluding non-routine items, the surplus was £18K.

- We received £4K from Open Gardens ticket sales, a fantastic new record
- We had a £5K legacy from the estate of Meralyn Claudine Homan
- We had a £1.8K contribution from Friends of St Barts, for bell ropes and other items
- Parish share was lower until Mandy's arrival in September; it is now set at £2K/month, so this year will be £24K, up from £16K in 2025
- We had £1.7K costs re the drainage/soakaway issue, which is now resolved

Orford St Bartholomews Church

2025 accounts	2025	2024
<b>"Routine" income &amp; expenditure</b>		
<b>Money in</b>		
Parish Giving incl Gift Aid	21422	22466
Contactless excl Gift Aid	8908	7999
Other gifts & general income incl Gift Aid	11633	9152
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>41963</b>	<b>39617</b>
Fees for services & graves	3000	5838
Concerts	7030	3125
Interest	3735	4064
Barts Hall & other	1704	245
<b>Sub-total "routine" money in</b>	<b>57432</b>	<b>52889</b>
<b>Money out</b>		
Parish share	16000	21000
Music (organ playing, tuning/repair, other)	6468	5870
Insurance	5814	5422
Buildings & grounds incl utilities	7545	8870
Other operating costs (net of cost recoveries)	3584	2770
<b>Sub-total "routine" money out</b>	<b>39411</b>	<b>43932</b>
<b>"Routine" surplus/deficit</b>	<b>18021</b>	<b>8957</b>
Legacy	5000	
Friends Of St Barts (ropes & other)	1779	
VAT refund on bell ropes	316	
Cap ex: soakaway (architect, plans)	-1684	
Prior year non-routine items		-10652
<b>Non-routine items</b>	<b>5411</b>	<b>-10652</b>
<b>Actual surplus/deficit</b>	<b>23432</b>	<b>-1695</b>
<b>Bank balances</b>		
<b>Start</b>	<b>97447</b>	<b>99142</b>
<b>End</b>	<b>120879</b>	<b>97447</b>
<b>Change</b>	<b>23432</b>	<b>-1695</b>

Reviewed & approved  
by independent examiner:

J Calder

JUDITH CALDER

26.2.26.

## 2025 Deanery Synod Report

The Woodbridge Deanery Synod had 3 meetings last year, 2 held at St Felix Rendlesham and the other at St John's Woodbridge. The first meeting always chaired by Revd Mandy Reynolds, Rural Dean and Mary Hare, Lay Chair, introduced Jane Sheet, Diocesan Director of Education. The Diocese currently works with 87 schools in Suffolk and 4 in the Woodbridge Deanery – Bawdsey, St Mary's Woodbridge, Eyke and Orford. Jane went on to outline the Diocese's role in education, the role of governors in ensuring the links between church and school, setting standards and ensuring finances are well spent. Jane also introduced a film outlining the personal experiences of governors, how to become one, and the work and support involved. Options were discussed to reorganise the Safeguarding teams and outsource either the National Safeguarding Team or all Diocesan Safeguarding teams. Synod voted for the latter but in the interim to use the former as a stop gap measure.

Our second meeting in July welcomed Karen Galloway and Allison Baalham from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team. Karen outlined the imperative of ensuring all members of the church community are safe. Allison detailed resources available to Parish Safeguarding Officers to assist them in meeting national mandatory safeguarding requirements – parish dashboards and parish hubs (via an App), face to face and online training, posters, risk assessments, lone working policy and other community support networks. Karen finished by detailing the process for contacting the Safeguarding team and how out of hours support would operate. Mary Hare, our Lay Chair, reported clergy wellbeing was a concern due to increasing financial hardship due to pension changes and the lack of affordable retirement housing.

Our last meeting in October had Edward Creasy, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary. Edward said as Chair of the DBF his role is to ensure that the financial management of the Diocese keeps the Church in Suffolk sustainable for the future. He remarked that the majority of food banks in his experience were run by people of faith in the local community and considered it likely that the Church of England in Suffolk was the largest network of local charities and volunteers in the county and was underpinned by people working together and giving up their time. Gary presented slides detailing the current and previous years funding and expenditure. He explained that finances were fragile currently and the challenge was to create financial sustainability against a background of ageing congregations and fewer donations whilst maintaining clergy numbers. An issue was the imbalance of Parish Share receipts across the financial year and suggested regular monthly payments would greatly assist the payment of stipends. Recent budget setting was able to freeze Parish Share payments until 2027.

At all meetings, all churches are asked for any special events held, help needed, and questions regarding future plans for the Woodbridge Deanery.

*Jacki Maslin*

## **Churchwardens Report**

There have been no unforeseen problems in the last year.

The drainage of the roof water has been resolved and the two other projects, the remedial heating wire and removal of radiators and associated pipework, are in the diary to be completed within the next two weeks. The start of these works has been held up by the need to get input from all those who had an interest in the works and to ensure the specifications were correct. There are no works scheduled after these current ones.

We unfortunately lost Peter, our hardworking grass cutter and general gardener, and we have had to employ a professional gardener to help keep the churchyard tidy as there were no volunteers when a plea was put in the Village Voice. The gardener will manage the eastern end of the grounds and I shall continue to cope with the rest.

Looking forward, there is certain to be some making good and decoration required once the radiators have been removed and it is hoped to acquire some bookcases to help with tidying up the thriving second-hand book stall but the extent of this work will not become apparent until the current work has been done.

The church was inspected by the surveyor of our insurance company, Ecclesiastical, and he found no major issues. Some of our Policy documents need looking at and the couple of small remedial works have already been attended to. Surprisingly, as a result of this inspection, our annual premium has been reduced.

Guy Marshall

## **Fabric Report 2025/26**

There were three areas of concern over the last twelve months.

The blocked gullies and soakaways, which had been a problem for over a year was finally resolved, without the anticipated excavations and cost. Whereas there was a lot of work put into the project which was not, in the end used, we now have a better understanding of the drainage system which will be helpful in the case of future problems.

The remedial wiring was started but had to be stopped when it was decided that the complete wiring runs needed to be replaced. The specifications are being finalised after consultation with the church insurers and the DAC. Once this work has been done, the project can be quickly completed, and we will have complied with the chancellor's ruling.

A problem unresolved at the moment is the loss of our gardener to pastures anew. Whilst I can continue to cover some of the grass cutting, we will need extra help. There was nothing forthcoming from an appeal in the Village Voice and so I am hoping to speak to Hollesley Bay Colony to see if they have any work parties available. In the absence of any luck in that direction we may have to employ a commercial operator.

In the list of minor works are the annual inspection of the E Bound alarm system and an inspection by the Ecclesiastical Insurance surveyor. Prior to this I hope to have all electrical equipment checked and certified as safe.

Guy Marshall



# Benefice Safeguarding Report 2025/2026 for the Wilford Peninsula

## Presented to the APCM

The benefice safeguarding team for the Wilford Peninsula continues to consist of myself, as benefice safeguarding officer, supported by a cluster representative for each of our clusters. Together, we work to ensure that every member of our leadership, congregations, and wider communities feels safe, heard, and supported. Safeguarding is not simply a policy—it is a culture we are committed to nurturing across all our churches.

As safeguarding officer, I am responsible for ensuring that concerns are responded to with compassion, efficiency, and in accordance with Church of England and diocesan guidance. This includes escalating matters to the diocesan safeguarding team when required and ensuring that incumbents remain informed of developments in a timely and appropriate manner.

### National and Diocesan Context

Safeguarding remains a prominent issue in both society and the Church of England. With the appointment of the new Archbishop of Canterbury, there has been renewed emphasis on transparency, accountability, and strengthening safeguarding culture nationally. This aligns closely with the priorities of our new Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich, who has expressed a clear commitment to ensuring that safeguarding is embedded in every aspect of diocesan life.

This year, the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich completed a full safeguarding audit as part of its ongoing commitment to improvement and accountability. We are currently awaiting the publication of the final report. Once released, we will review its findings carefully and implement any recommendations relevant to our benefice. This will be an important opportunity for reflection, learning, and strengthening our practice.

### Training, Compliance, and the Importance of Ongoing Development

Safeguarding training across the Church of England continues to evolve, with updated content and clearer expectations for those in leadership and volunteer roles. However, this year has brought **significant challenges**. Many of you will be aware of the **limited availability of training sessions**, the **longer waiting times**, and the **constraints on diocesan capacity**. This has understandably caused frustration for those trying to remain compliant and for those stepping into new roles.

Despite these challenges, the importance of training cannot be overstated. These courses equip us to recognise signs of concern, respond appropriately, and maintain confidence in our safeguarding responsibilities. They are essential to our shared commitment to creating safe, trustworthy environments.

Because of the current delays, I strongly encourage everyone to:

- **check the expiry dates on your training certificates now**
- **contact me early if you are unsure what level of training you need**

- **book onto available courses as soon as possible**, even if your renewal date is still some months away

Approaching this early will help prevent gaps in compliance and ensure that no one is unexpectedly asked to pause their ministry or volunteer role.

To support this, I am asking that the attached table is used to indicate the levels of safeguarding training people have completed and if known the dates, this will allow me to ensure we are able to maintain an accurate and transparent training database. This will help us track:

- who has completed which training
- when renewals are due
- who needs DBS checks or rechecks
- where we may need to plan ahead due to limited course availability

Enhanced DBS checks remain mandatory for anyone working regularly with children or vulnerable adults, and these must be renewed every three years. The diocese continues to recommend that Parish Treasurers also complete a DBS check, and I will be contacting individuals about this in due course.

These processes may feel demanding, especially in a year where training access has been more difficult, but they exist to protect those we serve—and to protect us in our ministries. Anyone who is not compliant with training or DBS requirements will be asked to step back from their role until the necessary steps are completed.

## Transparent Recording and Communication

This year we have placed renewed emphasis on **transparent, accurate, and consistent record-keeping**. Good safeguarding practice depends not only on responding well in the moment, but also on maintaining clear documentation that supports accountability, continuity, and learning. Sadly due to time constraints and availability I have not been able to implement this as I had hoped last year, with that in mind it is my hope and aim to develop this area this year.

To strengthen this area, I am:

- implementing more structured systems for recording concerns
- ensuring that all safeguarding information is stored securely and appropriately
- improving communication pathways between cluster representatives, clergy, and the diocesan safeguarding team
- making it easier for individuals to report concerns promptly and confidently

Safeguarding thrives where communication is open, timely, and trusted. I encourage everyone—clergy, PCC members, volunteers, and congregation members—to speak to me, a cluster representative, or a member of leadership if they have any concerns at all.

## Safeguarding Activity in the Benefice

Although our churches remain safe and welcoming places, we have been involved in several safeguarding matters this year, involving both adults and children across different parts of the benefice. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the diocesan safeguarding team, clergy, and cluster representatives for their guidance and support. I am also deeply grateful to members of our congregations whose attentiveness and care have brought concerns to light. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and your vigilance makes a real difference.

## Looking Ahead

The year ahead remains uncertain for many in our communities. Economic pressures, social tensions, and global instability continue to affect people's wellbeing. Our churches have a vital role to play in offering stability, compassion, and safety.

May we continue to use our ministries, our training, and our shared commitment to safeguarding to:

- recognise signs of concern
- respond with wisdom and care
- promote a culture that is proactive rather than reactive
- build communities where every person feels valued and protected

## A Prayer for Safeguarding

Dear God,

Help us to be a church that: Loves, welcomes, protects. Listens, learns, serves. Repents, restores, transforms. Values, cares, believes.

God of justice and compassion, hear our prayer. Help us, heal us, guide us, we pray. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

## **Charlotte Gooch**

Benefice Safeguarding Officer March 2026