



# Wickham Bishops Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018

<b>YOUR COUNCILLORS</b>	<b>AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Cllr. Mandy Mickelsen Chairman	Finance Committee Chairman Neighbourhood Planning (NHP)
Cllr. Ian Wardrop Vice-Chairman	NHP and Planning Committee Speedwatch and Traffic Calming
Cllr. Henry Bass District Councillor	District Council Liaison Environment
Cllr. Peter Bates	Website Manager Publicity
Cllr. Judy Elliston <i>(co-opted January 2018)</i>	
Cllr. Iain MacGregor	Planning Committee Chairman Amenities and Finance Committee
Cllr. Richard Mundell	Finance and Planning Committees Social Media
Cllr. Stephen Nicholas	Highways Public Rights of Way
Cllr. Jane Williams	NHP Steering Group Chairman BHSA Trustee
<b>NON-COUNCILLORS</b>	<b>AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Mrs. Liane Rowland	Parish Clerk & RFO
Heelis & Lodge	Internal Auditor

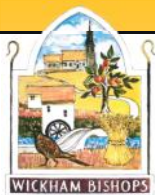
### MEETING SCHEDULE

Wickham Bishops Parish Council meets on the first Tuesday of each month, except August, in the Village Hall Boardroom at 7.30pm. The Planning Committee meets if required, on the third Friday of each month in the Boardroom at 11.30am. Members of the public and press are welcome to attend these meetings.

Agendas are displayed on the Parish noticeboard by One Stop and on the website at [www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](http://www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org), where the minutes can also be found.

### HOW TO CONTACT YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

All correspondence should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.  
Write c/o the Village Hall, Church Road, Wickham Bishops, CM8 3JZ  
Email to [info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](mailto:info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org) or call or text on 07542 190176



## RESIDENTS' NEWS

The youth club is held every other Friday in St. Bartholomew's Church Hall during term time. It is a parent run club and has not required financial support from the Parish Council this year.

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Council lost the help of Mr. Paul Edwards in June last year when he resigned as Councillor, but in January 2018 the Parish Council was fortunate to welcome Mrs. Judy Elliston. The Council is back to its full complement of nine Councillors, and as two-thirds of the Councillors gained their seats during the election in May 2015 and the Clerk is suitably trained and qualified, the Council enjoys the benefits of the General Power of Competence - that is, the Council may 'do anything that individuals generally may do' (unless prohibited by other legislation, of course!). In practice, this means the Council can take on a variety of projects for the benefit of residents.

In addition to the Councillors, the parish is fortunate to have the support of Mr. Chris Cooke, a local arboriculturalist who voluntarily acts as the parish's Tree Warden and advises on matters pertaining to trees and Tree Protection Orders. Residents are also now benefitting from an active Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Thank you to everyone who has given some time over the last year to the village and community.

Residents can follow the Council's progress via the noticeboards, email, website, Facebook and the monthly Surgery held at the library, where two Parish Councillors and a District Councillor are available to listen to problems and suggestions.

Time-sensitive issues are often posted on the Council's Facebook page; changes to waste collections, pharmacy opening hours over Christmas and upcoming roadworks and road closures being three examples. You can follow the Council's page here: <https://www.facebook.com/WickhamBishopsParishCouncil/>

Statutory documents, meeting dates and agendas are all available on the Council's website and draft minutes are published within a few days of a meeting. The website was updated during the past year, and whilst there is more work to be done, many have complimented the Council on the clarity of the new version. The Council has also moved to an improved email system, although Councillors' email addresses remain unchanged. Brief reports of Council activity, highlighting a few matters of interest or concern, are included every month in the Parish Magazine, along with occasional articles from the Speedwatch Team, the Neighbourhood Planning Group and Neighbourhood Watch.

## AMENITIES REPORT

The Council is restoring the World War 2 air raid shelter in the library car park, for use as a road salt store and preservation as an item of historical and educational interest. It has now been cleared inside and out, and roof maintenance has been carried out. The Council is grateful to the parish Tree Warden for removing the ivy.

The Council was pleased to note the telecoms mast, located on the sports field, became operational in February; it has improved access to O2 and Vodaphone networks for some parts of the village. It is hoped that more providers with a wider reach will be added.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Following campaigning by residents and Councillors, the Maldon-bound bus stop was repositioned in April, from its dangerous and unofficial location at Snows Corner, to a new location opposite the existing bus shelter in Witham Road.

## PLANNING

The formal opening of the affordable housing at Mackmurdo Place was recently conducted by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, as patron of the English Rural Housing Association. The Princess unveiled a plaque, met residents and later met others involved in the housing project. HRH demonstrated a thorough understanding and knowledge of the issues around the provision of affordable housing and appeared impressed with the site and design.

The Council considered 66 planning applications this fiscal year, ranging from Permitted Development applications and Tree Preservation Orders through to multiple dwelling applications. Whilst the quantity is similar to last year, the complexity and scale has grown. The largest proposal, for 52 houses in Church Road, was refused by Maldon District Council (MDC) with strong support from the Parish Council and villagers; its approval by the Planning Inspectorate was then challenged by judicial review brought by the District Council with the Parish Council's backing, and the decision quashed. The appeal was finally re-determined and dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate, thanks to input from parishioners and Councillors and the approval of Maldon district's Local Development Plan.

The Parish Council has continued its efforts to improve the layout of the development of the land to the east of Malone Cottage, which received outline planning permission for fourteen houses two years ago.

The removal of the Parish Trigger by the district council was considered a disappointing reduction of the Parish Council's influence on the planning process, and along with other parishes and towns and the Essex Association of Local Councils, the Parish Council is lobbying MDC to rethink its decision.

Residents can keep abreast of planning applications and decisions in the village by opting to receive the Parish Council's regular planning email. Please email the Parish Clerk [info@wickhambishopparishcouncil.org](mailto:info@wickhambishopparishcouncil.org) to be added to the list.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The parish's Neighbourhood Plan continues to progress, with the draft policies nearly completed. The pre-Regulation 14 Draft Plan policies cover the four areas of Economy, Environment, Facilities and Housing and are supported by existing data, consultation and evidence gathered by surveys. There has been a good response to all three surveys conducted; you may have filled in the Housing Needs, Residents or Business surveys yourself. When complete, the Plan will be reviewed by a planning consultant if necessary and amended, prior to a referendum on its acceptance by the parish. Grants are available to fund the review and, while timescales are difficult to predict, if few changes are recommended by the consultant and Maldon District Council, the referendum could be reached late this year.

The Neighbourhood Plan documents can be found on the Parish Council's website: <https://www.wickhambishopparishcouncil.org/neighbourhood-plan/>

## POWER TO MAKE GRANTS

The Local Government Act 1972 (s.137) enables the Council to make grants available to local initiatives that benefit residents of the parish; if you have an idea for a community project or get together please contact the Parish Clerk.

## TRAFFIC CALMING

The extension of the 30mph speed limit in Church Road to its junction with Mope Lane and Station Road was eventually implemented in February 2018. It remains a matter of disappointment to your Council that this relatively straightforward and inexpensive measure took nearly five years to be put in place. The possibility of a 40mph buffer zone in Witham Road, from Mope Lane to the 30mph zone was rejected on the grounds that it did not meet Department for Transport criteria.

The two Speed Indicator Devices, installed in January 2017, remained at the same sites in The Street and Kelvedon Road, until April 2018, despite constant requests to Maldon district's Local Highways Panel (LHP) to put in place arrangements for their rotation to the other sites at Witham Road, Maypole Road and Beacon Hill. Hopefully, a process has now been put in place to move them regularly. The feasibility study into road narrowing at The Street was deferred until 2018/19 but subsequently brought back into the programme for 2017/18. The initial study was expected to be completed by the end of March, with detailed design work to be undertaken later. Further contact from the LHP is awaited. Your Council will continue to press the LHP for action on the agreed measures.

The request to Braintree's Local Highways Panel to extend the operational hours of the traffic lights at the junction of Blue Mills Hill and Maldon Road is still in validation; this has the support of Witham Town Council and Wickham Bishops Parish Council.

## SPEEDWATCH

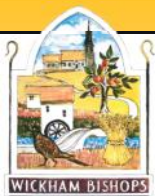
Three additional volunteers were trained in July and joined the team in carrying out Speedwatch checks at the approved sites throughout the village. During the course of the year 95 checks were carried out, with 1091 vehicles reported, which represents a slight reduction per session compared with last year. One persistent offender was targeted by police and duly caught in Maypole Road. A record of activity is placed on the Parish Council Noticeboard beside One Stop each month and the Council is very grateful to all the volunteers who are out at various times of the day, including early mornings and, during this Winter especially, in some very cold conditions.

## POLICING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Policing cutbacks resulted in contact with the Police Service being limited to Speedwatch measures, however your District Councillors remain in contact with your local District Commander and will take up any issues that are reported to them.

Happily, the Neighbourhood Watch scheme was restarted during the year and the Parish Council is grateful to Sian Bewick and her band of willing helpers.





## DID YOU KNOW?

If notified, the Parish Council Facebook page lists road closures, but for the latest and most accurate information you can check upcoming roadworks and diversion routes directly via the website: <https://roadworks.org/>

## HIGHWAYS REPORT

Residents will have observed the extensive road patching in February, in preparation for resurfacing. Acting on complaints received, the Parish Council wrote to the County Council with photographs of crumbling patches, damaged verges and left-behind waste materials threatening to block drains. Remedial works have been promised for early Spring.

Your Councillors have helped to resolve flooding for some villagers by lobbying Essex County Council (ECC) and liaising with watercourse engineers. Regrettably, flooding remains a problem for some houses due to limited resources at County Hall.

## PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Inspections of all footpaths (FP) took place to establish their condition and need for maintenance or improvement. ECC resurfaced FP1 in the area prone to flooding and the Parish Council was pleased to note this has much improved the situation.

A number of queries from local residents regarding rights of way, possible obstructions and possible safety issues were investigated and answered or escalated to ECC. FP17 was again obstructed with crops and is now on an ECC watchlist; action may be taken against the farmer or landowner if this reoccurs.

The Council is proud of the attractive and varied footpaths in the parish and has re-joined the Parish Paths Partnership — a County Council-sponsored programme that trains volunteers in footpath maintenance and first aid and provides the necessary tools and equipment.

## ENVIRONMENT

A new dog waste bin was installed at the junction of Wellands and Church Road in March and is already much used. The Parish Council has since received requests for bins at Kelvedon Road and near the Library and will consider these in due course.

Dog fouling continues to be a problem in the village and the Parish Council has begun using temporary spray paint to highlight the mess. It is hoped the orange marking will help residents to avoid it and may encourage offenders to change their habits.

The annual litter pick also took place recently and Councillors were delighted to have a large number of new volunteers this year, in addition to the Tennis Club regulars. The Parish Council is grateful to everyone for the record turnout.

Pink recycling bags are always available at the start of Parish Council meetings, and food waste and recycling bags are free from the library during normal opening times.

At this time of the year hedges grow rapidly. Please check your boundaries and consider if the infirm, wheelchair-bound and partially-sighted will be able to pass.



## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

If you have a few hours to spare why not join the Speedwatch team, or get involved with the Neighbourhood Plan? Perhaps you would like to join the Footpath maintenance volunteers?

## FINANCE

Parishioners will note from their Council Tax Demands that for 2018/19 the Wickham Bishops Precept has risen by 23.7%. This sounds high, but represents an additional £2.96 per annum on a Band D property, or approximately 5p per week, and is the first rise in Precept since 2008. In the last few years the Parish Council has been using up reserves in order to bring them to the right level, where they are now.

Last year the Council worked hard opposing inappropriate development, including funding experts to represent the parish, with the clear approval of the 70+ parishioner attendees at the two extraordinary meetings on this topic. The Council has deemed it sensible to budget for the expectation that further inappropriate development may well need to be opposed over the coming year. In 2018/19 the Council is facing additional costs generated due to legal obligations, such as the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations, and employee pension auto-enrolment. The Clerk's job grading has also been adjusted to bring it into line with National guidelines.

Parish Councillors are, of course, unpaid volunteers who work on the village's behalf, with planning issues and the very active Speedwatch being two highly visible and important areas. We hope you'll appreciate we work incredibly hard to keep our operating costs to a minimum and to provide the best value for money to residents, and we thank you for your understanding of the need for a rise.

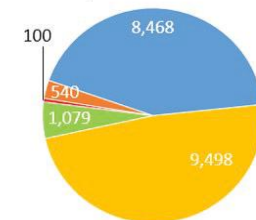
### Accounting Statement 2016-17

Opening Balance	16,462
Precept	12,000
Other Receipts	5,569
Total Expenditure	-19,685
Closing Balance	<u>£ 14,346</u>

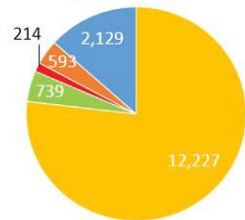
### Accounting Statement 2017-18

Opening Balance	14,346
Precept	12,000
Other Receipts	2,442
Total Expenditure	-15,902
Closing Balance	<u>£ 12,886</u>

### Expenditure 2016-17



### Expenditure 2017-18



## USEFUL NUMBERS

- The Parish Clerk: Liane Rowland 07542 190176
- The Village Hall: Bookings Clerk 07543 033783
- Maldon District Council: 01621 854477
- Loss of electricity supply: UK Power Networks 0800 783 8838

*Best regards,  
The Parish Council*