



# Wickham Bishops Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019

<b>YOUR COUNCIL</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	Environment Library Working Group
Cllr. Peter Bates	Library Working Group Chairman Publicity & Website Manager
D/Cllr. Karl Jarvis	District Council Liaison ( <i>from May 2019</i> ) Library Working Group
Cllr. Iain MacGregor	Planning Committee Chairman Amenities and Finance Committee
Cllr. Richard Mundell	Finance and Planning Committees Social Media
Cllr. Stephen Nicholas	Environment and Public Rights of Way Highways
Cllr. Jane Williams	NHP Steering Group Chairman BHSA Trustee
Mrs. Liane Rowland	Parish Clerk & RFO
Heelis & Lodge	Internal Auditor

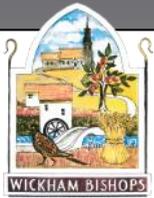
### MEETING SCHEDULE

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. A Parish Council Surgery Hour is held monthly on the third Saturday in the library, at 10.30am. 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  
 [WickhamBishopsParishCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/WickhamBishopsParishCouncil)



## POLICING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

We are grateful to have a strong Neighbourhood Watch led by Sian Bewick, who keeps the Council apprised of local criminal activity and trends. Please report anything suspicious to your street representative. District Councillors remain in contact with your local District Commander and will escalate issues if needed.

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

In August, the Parish Council was saddened to receive the resignation of Judy Elliston, who was moving from the area. Once again the Council was fortunate to have multiple applicants for the vacancy, and was back to its full complement of nine Councillors in October, with the co-option of Karl Jarvis. The Council continues to qualify for the General Power of Competence, which may become particularly useful once the outcome of Essex County Council's proposal to close the library is known.

There are many volunteer opportunities in the Parish. Litter picking, footpath maintenance, clubs, Neighbourhood Watch, Neighbourhood Plan development, library future planning and Speedwatch all rely on the help of residents. Thank you to everyone who has given some time over the last year to the village and community.

In November, we remembered the ending of the First World War, with the laying of a wreath at the War Memorial, and later by reading the names of the fallen from our village at the lighting of the Beacon. We had our own Tommy silhouette for the event, and he will make another appearance next November.

The Parish sign has been removed for maintenance, and has been restored by two volunteers, to whom we are immensely grateful. A new pole will now be installed and the sign re-mounted.

Residents can follow the Council's activities via the minutes on the website. A brief report is also included in every monthly magazine, whilst the village noticeboards and Facebook page also have regular updates. To raise issues, why not attend the monthly Surgery held at the library, where two Parish Councillors and, occasionally, a District or County Councillor are available to listen to problems and suggestions?

## LIBRARY REPORT

The County Council's Library Strategy consultation was launched in November 2018, classifying Wickham Bishops library as a Tier 4 service and recommending it be closed. The Parish Council immediately organised a group of Councillors to draft a response and investigate possible options.

The demographics of Wickham Bishops means that parents of pre-schoolers and the elderly are particularly affected by the closure plans, putting them at increased risk of social isolation which is a key concern for any rural parish. The group identified several flaws with the strategy's data and its application to Wickham Bishops. A full response was submitted along with an Expression of Interest in taking on the building and service if the threat of closure is realised.

The library group has expanded to include members of the public, and is developing a business plan to acquire the property and run it as a community asset, retaining a much needed meeting space and social venue. The consultation results are due in the summer; if the challenge to the closure fails, the team has enlisted the support of MP Priti Patel and will have a business plan in place to move quickly. Our thanks go to Great Totham and Little Braxted Parish Councils for offering their support too.

## PARKING DIFFICULTIES BY ONE STOP, THE MITRE AND ADJACENT ROADS

Your Council has been in contact with the business proprietors and One Stop is looking into more parking to the rear and in front. The car sales business has given assurances that "for sale" and customer vehicles will not be parked near the junction or on The Mitre's carpark. The situation will continue to be monitored and further efforts will be made if the problems persist.

### PLANNING

Three Parish Councillors sit on the planning committee, with the assistance of our Tree Warden, Chris Cooke and the Parish Clerk. All applications relating to trees under preservation orders are referred to Mr Cooke for his advice, whilst the Clerk has delegated authority to respond to Listed Building Consents and permitted development proposals.

Applications of a commercial nature and multi-dwelling development are referred to the full Council, with twelve such applications this year. Maldon District Council registered our concerns over three multi-development sites. There have been around 40 other applications which covered garages, extensions, replacement dwellings and single houses. Despite the number of applications, there have been no large or highly contentious plans.

It may be recalled that building on the field between Maypole Road and Great Totham Road, opposite the tennis courts, was being considered last year. The Parish Council was opposed to this development which was then allowed on appeal. Since then, the Council has liaised with Moody Homes to shape the plans to the best benefit of the Parish. Nine large houses are still planned, and five affordable properties, however traffic movement will be limited by cul-de-sac entrances from both roads, with no through access to vehicles. A path to the south of the site will be created, linking the west of the Parish to the school walking route, and protective archery range netting will be installed at the Prances boundary. Building has now started.

The Council supported the bid to provide three detached bungalows on the site of Pine Trees on The Street, by Patten Homes. By fulfilling part of the village housing need, consulting residents and removing an unpopular footway element, the application was quickly approved by the District Council. Building will begin in May.



### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Parish's Neighbourhood Plan reached an important milestone in March 2019, with completion of the consultation on the pre-Regulation 14 Draft Plan. Thank you to everyone who completed the survey; the team was pleased to note a high level of support from residents. The few objections tended to come from owners and associates of fields suggested as Local Green Spaces — a designation which will grant strong protections to their future use. The team is now capturing further evidence to support the fields bordering Handley's Lane and the graveyard as Local Green Spaces. If you have old photographs, anecdotal or historic written evidence of their use and enjoyment by residents, please contact the Parish Clerk.

## POWER TO MAKE GRANTS

The Local Government Act 1972 (s.137) enables the Council to make funds available for local initiatives. If you have an idea for a project or need funding for a community group or club, please contact the Parish Clerk for an application form.

Please note that all grants should mainly benefit residents of the Parish.

## TRAFFIC CALMING

A feasibility study into road narrowing in The Street was conducted by Essex Highways engineers on behalf of Maldon District's Local Highways Panel (LHP) and two of your Councillors discussed options with the engineers on site. Following automatic speed surveys in Witham Road, The Street and Maypole Road in September 2018, the LHP concluded that a better first step was to install white gates at the main village entryways of Maypole Road and Witham Road.

The gates are on the provisional list to be installed by April 2020, with follow-up speed surveys about six months later. Whilst these types of gates have had an impact on speeds elsewhere, your Council believes that some form of road narrowing is more likely to reduce speeds, and will be closely following the speed survey results.

Our two Speed Indicator Devices are now being moved around the five sites every three months and appear to have the desired effect of slowing speeding vehicles where they are in position.

We were all deeply saddened by the fatal collision in Witham Road, near the junction with Mope Lane, in October 2018. Acting on residents' concerns about speeding between Wellands and Blue Mills Bridge, the LHP was asked to implement speed restrictions. The LHP will also be approached to provide improvements in road signs to give better warning to drivers of the dangers of the many bends in the road.

The request to Braintree District's LHP to extend the operational hours of the traffic lights, at the junction of Maldon Road and Blue Mills Hill, is still being pursued. By increasing the working hours to align more closely to the busiest times of the week, it should reduce queuing at the bridge. We hope this will be implemented this year.

## SPEEDWATCH

Speedwatch activity continued, with 95 checks by the volunteers and a total of 1340 vehicles reported to police. Regrettably, the slight reduction last year was not matched this year, with an additional 249 vehicles recorded over the same number of checks. This can be partly explained by the teams concentrating their efforts on the busiest sites but it remains a matter of concern that the incidence of speeding is still high. A record of activity is placed on the Parish Council Noticeboard beside One Stop each month. The Council is appreciative of the volunteers who are out at various times, including early mornings and often in very cold conditions.

The Council also employed Maldon District's Community Protection Team (CPT), which is trained in and authorised by Police to use the TRUCam speed detection device. The information this records is then passed to Police for prosecution action, which could involve a speed awareness course, or a fixed penalty and points on the driver's licence; for high speeds or persistent offenders, prosecution through the courts with greater fines and points and disqualification is possible. Since July 2018, 177 drivers have been reported by the CPT. This service will continue through the coming year.



## DID YOU KNOW? HEDGE & DITCH OWNERSHIP

The Hedge & Ditch Rule from the early 19th century, presumes that a ditch must have been dug after the boundary was drawn, and that the person making the ditch, cut into the furthest border of his own land. He deposited the soil on his own land, preventing it from falling back into the ditch by planting a hedge.

## HIGHWAYS REPORT

Extensive top-dressing works were carried out throughout the Parish. In response to the Parish Council, Essex Highways made three visits to sweep roads and remove loose chippings afterwards. Whilst it perhaps isn't the resurfacing method of choice for many residents, swingeing cuts at County Hall means options are limited.

A number of potholes and areas of damaged footway in the village were reported to Essex County Council for priority repair, and some of these have been dealt with.

With the Parish Council's support, the County Council and Maldon District Council have agreed to tackle a blocked ditch running along Footpath 12, from Church Green to Grange Road. This should alleviate some serious flooding problems for Grange Road properties. Flooding after heavy rain in Church Road and Handley's Lane was reported to Essex County Council, and has been mitigated in Church Road and is under investigation in Handley's Lane.

## PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

A team of volunteers was created under the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme, with help from Essex County Council. The team cleared nettles, brambles and overhanging branches from footpaths in and around the village; and repaired or erected way mark posts and fingerposts. A plan is in place to improve the muddy surface between Handley's Lane and Kelvedon Road, once materials have been received from the County Council.

An on-going issue regarding crops obstructing part of Footpath 17, from Grange Road to Langford Road, has been pursued and the team is delighted that the right of way has since been cleared. Please use the path straight across the field.

## ENVIRONMENT

Councillors got creative and made some dog waste bag dispensers, which are fixed to the dog waste bins around the village. Dog walkers are invited to take a bag when needed, and add a couple when possible. The scheme has been working very successfully, but sadly, incidents of dog fouling remain. You may see orange paint highlighting the offences, which has had some beneficial effect and of course helps innocents avoid the mess. Persistent offenders have been reported to the CPT, which has posted warning signs and carried out surveillance for possible prosecution.

Thank you to all who helped at the two litter pick events held this year. Around 20 sacks in total were filled with rubbish. You can report persistent littering to the Clerk who will liaise with the CPT; if there is evidence indicating those responsible, hefty fines can be imposed.

*Image: Paula Wiseman*



## PROPOSED REMOVAL OF FREE BUS PASS CONCESSIONS ON PARK & RIDE

Essex County Council is consulting on changes to the Park and Ride services. The consultation will run until 31 July 2019. Paper copies of the questionnaire are available from the Sandon, Chelmer Valley and Colchester Park and Ride sites and online at: [www.essex.gov.uk/park-and-ride-fares-consultation](http://www.essex.gov.uk/park-and-ride-fares-consultation)

### FINANCE

The Parish was fortunate this year that no expenditure was necessary to combat inappropriate development, however until the Neighbourhood Plan is in place, some of your best loved environments remain at risk. It is also likely that some funding will be required in 2019/20 to retain the library building and service, possibly by the year end, so the Council has ringfenced funds for both these issues. Of course, the Council is actively exploring all grant and loan sources available.

This year, the Parish Council was contacted over traffic problems and dog fouling more than any other topic, and in response decided to increase the service it obtains from the Community Protection Team. In the coming year, the Parish will also be contributing its share towards the cost of road closures for the annual Remembrance event. Parishioners will note from their Council Tax Demands that for 2019/20 the Wickham Bishops Precept rose by £1.61 per annum on a Band D property, or approximately 3p per week, to fund these items.

The 2018/19 Annual Return will be available to view on the One Stop noticeboard from 17<sup>th</sup> June to 26<sup>th</sup> July, in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Please address any questions in the first instance to the Parish Clerk.

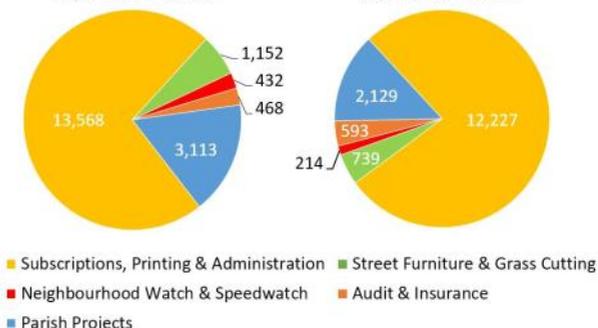
#### Accounting Statement 2017-18

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

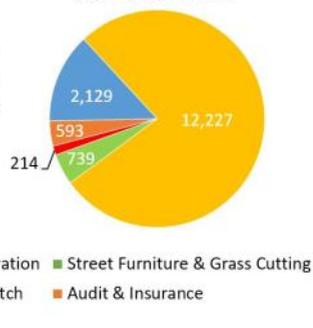
#### Accounting Statement 2018-19

Opening Balance	12,886
Precept	15,222
Other Receipts	4,061
Total Expenditure	-18,734
Closing Balance	<u>13,435</u>

#### Expenditure 2018-19



#### Expenditure 2017-18



### USEFUL NUMBERS

- The Parish Clerk: Liane Rowland 07542 190176
- The Village Hall: Bookings Clerk 07543 033783
- Maldon District Council: 01621 854477
- Essex County Council: 0345 743 0430
- Loss of electricity supply: UK Power Networks 0800 783 8838

*Best regards,  
The Parish Council*