



# Wickham Bishops Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022

YOUR COUNCIL	AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY
Cllr Ian Wardrop, Chairman	Planning Committee, Finance Committee Speedwatch and Traffic Calming
Cllr Henry Bass	Planning Committee Chair, Library Working Group
Cllr Peter Bates	Library Working Group, Publicity & Website
Cllr Karl Jarvis	Library Working Group Chair
Cllr Pete Layley	Amenities, Public Transport
Cllr Mandy Mickelsen	Finance Committee Chair, Environment Planning Committee
Cllr Richard Mundell	Social Media
Cllr Jane Williams	Finance Committee, BHSA Trustee, Biodiversity Project Chair
Lorraine Bailey	Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

### HOW TO CONTACT YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

All correspondence should be addressed to the Parish Clerk.

**Write to :** WBPC, c/o the Village Hall, Church Road, Wickham Bishops CM8 3JZ

**Call or text :** 07542 190176

**Email :** [info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](mailto:info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org)

**Website :** [www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](http://www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org)

**Notice Board outside One Stop** for Agendas, Minutes and other useful information

**Facebook page :** Wickham Bishops Parish Council

and look out for our regular article in the monthly Parish Magazine, hand delivered to every household.

### PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Parish Council meets on the first Tuesday of each month, except August, at 7.30pm. The Planning Committee meets if required, on the third Friday of each month 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.



## THANKS TO PARISH MAGAZINE

Many thanks to those involved with the Parish Magazine for arranging for this report to be delivered with the magazine. The Parish Council is very grateful for your participation.

## PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The past year has seen a return to near normality following the restrictions arising from the pandemic in the preceding two years. Having had to hold meetings virtually by Zoom throughout the previous 12 months, we started off the year in the knowledge that the Government did not intend to renew the legislation that permitted remote meetings. We were obliged, therefore, to resume normal, face to face meetings. This we did in July but switched to using the Church Hall as it is larger than the Village Hall boardroom and better able to accommodate the numbers involved whilst maintaining social distancing. We have yet to revert to the Boardroom on a permanent basis. The popular monthly Saturday surgeries held in the Library haven't yet recommenced but the Council will discuss their resumption soon.

Cllr Stephen Nicholas stood down from the Council in March. We are grateful to him for his input over the past 8 years, in particular for his liaison with ECC in the setting up of the Parish Paths Partnership, which comprises a group of volunteers who help to keep the public footpaths clear of overgrown vegetation. The necessary process is under way for seeking Stephen's replacement.

Reference was made in last year's report to the new footpath between Maypole Road and Gt Totham Road, gifted to the Parish Council by the developers of the adjacent land. This footpath will enable pedestrians to avoid crossing at the difficult Mitre junction. We were hoping to have it completed in time for the Platinum Jubilee bank holiday weekend but further vegetation clearance is needed and we are taking advice on the need for pedestrian barriers at each end.

The Parish Council welcomed our newly elected District Councillor, Simon Morgan, at its meeting in March 2022. Simon is one of our two Ward District Councillors, the other being Mark Durham, who is also our Essex County Councillor. We look forward to working with Simon in conveying the parish's views to Maldon District Council. Karl Jarvis, who had stood down as the District Councillor at the end of 2021, continues as a Parish Councillor.

## PLANNING

In addition to the full Parish Council dealing with planning applications, the Planning Committee, comprising three Councillors assisted as necessary by Chris Cooke, our volunteer tree warden, met on a number of occasions throughout the year. In all, the Parish Council responded to 48 planning applications, 5 of which related to trees covered by tree protection orders. This was much the same as in previous years. Of the 48 applications, MDC confirmed our recommendations in all but 7 cases.

Generally, the Parish Council has continued to resist applications for new development beyond the defined settlement boundary. Our position is not helped, however, by the fact that MDC no longer has the required 5 year housing land supply and this failure, whilst not fatal, gives added support to developers, whether of a single property or large scale development, in their bids to build on open land.

## COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

If you have a spare hour now and again – once a week or fortnight or month – and if you're interested in joining the speedwatch volunteers, please contact [ian.wardrop@wickhambishopparishcouncil.org](mailto:ian.wardrop@wickhambishopparishcouncil.org) for more information.

## LIBRARY REPORT

As reported last year, the Working Group was originally set up to 'save the library' from the threat of closure by ECC. It is fair to say that in 2019/20 many libraries in Essex were also under similar threat. A vision was presented to ECC about how the building could be renovated and developed, so that it could be used more by the residents as a 'social hub' for activities and clubs as well as a library. We offered to purchase the building, although a reasonable price could not be agreed. We set up a number of clubs that would operate from the library. The 'Warhammer Alliance Club', which involved scouts, ran for several months pre-Covid and was an enormous success, as was 'Code club'. Other clubs including 'Beginners Bridge' were on the starting block when Covid hit. A Facebook site was set up so that the club activities could be communicated to the village: <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofwblibrary/>

In mid-2021, following the County Council elections, ECC did a U-turn on the closure program. Cllr McKinlay, with new responsibilities at ECC that included Library Services, engaged with the Working Group in December 2021. Cllr McKinlay confirmed that the library would continue to operate from its current location. We were then able to persuade ECC to commit not only to refurbish it but also to agree to invest capital and develop it.

The library has now been completely refurbished inside with new heating, new lighting, carpets, double glazed windows, damp proofing, roof cleaning and external decoration. The doors will also be replaced but are on special order as ECC want to replicate the existing styles. ECC are getting quotations for the development of the toilet-block into an area that will provide modern toilets, storage space, enhanced kitchen and hopefully a larger area for sitting and talking. They have committed to consult with us at the design stage. The consultation on this is in progress and the works are likely to be carried out later in the financial year.

At the time of writing, there is a formal reopening of the library on 28th May. This is also a "Love Your Library" day. We will be there to celebrate the refurbishment of the library building and to relaunch some of the clubs. The Working Group will follow closely the capital development plans to ensure that the enhanced building will serve the residents of Wickham Bishops, so that as well as a first-class library the building can be used as a social hub for clubs and residents of all ages.

Sincere thanks go to the members of the working group for all their excellent work: Cllrs Karl Jarvis (Chairman), Henry Bass and Peter Bates, and residents Gerard Harvey, Danielle Whittle and David Pearl.

## PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Many thanks to the volunteers who help to keep the public footpaths clear of vegetation and overhanging tree branches. It would be much appreciated if landowners with public footpaths crossing or on the edge of their land could keep the paths clear for walkers. Similarly, residents are reminded to keep hedges, trees etc. from obstructing pavements and growing out into the roadway.

## RECYCLING SACKS & FOOD WASTE BAGS

Don't forget, if you run out of recycling sacks or food waste bags, they're available to collect from Wickham Bishops Library. Opening times are: Mondays 2pm—5.30pm, Wednesdays 2pm—5.30pm and Saturdays 9am—5pm.

## TRAFFIC CALMING

Speeding through and in the village remains a concern to residents and the Parish Council has continued to press Essex Highways to introduce measures to alleviate the problem. The pandemic has undoubtedly delayed action being taken but the Parish Council is not convinced that the village's concerns are being given the degree of importance they merit. The numbers of vehicles the Speedwatch teams are picking up clearly indicate that this remains a problem (please see the Speedwatch section for more details). It is likely to get worse once the Heybridge Garden Suburb, or Westcombe Park, becomes a reality with more vehicles coming through the village to and from the A12 and Witham station.

Meetings have been held with our County Councillor, Mark Durham, and the County Councillor responsible for Highways, Lee Scott, to make clear our concerns and both Councillors attended the recent Annual Parish Assembly to respond to residents' questions and comments on this topic. Cllr Scott has undertaken to look into our concerns and report back to the village in the Summer. The Parish Council will keep residents informed of progress throughout the year.

Following the installation of the white gates in Maypole Road and Witham Road in 2019, we are still waiting for the outcome of the speed and traffic volumes survey apparently undertaken some time in 2020 to ascertain whether the gates had had any impact on speeds. Further speed surveys are due to be carried out later in the year which the Parish Council is sure will confirm the continued existence of speeding traffic in these two roads.

On highways matters generally, Cllrs Durham and Scott were taken round the village by two Parish Councillors on 5 November 2021 when problem areas of flooding caused by blocked gullies and drains were pointed out to them. Regrettably, very little action followed until the beginning of April 2022 when the flooding in Station Road by Hill Place was dealt with. At the same time, work was done and a warning marker post was placed at the collapsed verge at the same location. Again, the Parish Council will continue to press Essex Highways through the County Councillors for action to deal with outstanding issues.

Following a request by the Parish Council, a bus stop marking was provided for the stop in Kelvedon Road near the doctor's surgery. Vehicles had been parking across the stop, making it difficult for passengers getting on and off the bus there and causing the bus to block the road when stopping.

## DOG BINS

Two new dog waste bins were bought by the Parish Council through Maldon District Council and are positioned in Grange Road at the Library and the top of Handleys Lane at Kelvedon Road. Hopefully, these will help to keep the pavements and public footpaths clear. Dog owners are reminded to please clear up after their dog including along the public footpaths.

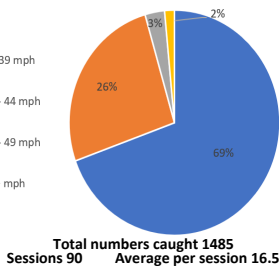


## ANNUAL LITTER PICK

If you'd like to take part in the annual litter pick (date to be confirmed), please register your interest with the Clerk by either calling 07542 190176 or emailing [info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](mailto:info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org)

## SPEEDWATCH

Lockdowns prevented almost all speedwatch activity in 2020 and early 2021 and the community speedwatch team was not able to recommence its monitoring activity until April last year. We have tended to concentrate on four sites where speeding is a particular concern: Maypole Road, Witham Road, Kelvedon Road and Beacon Hill. The chart below shows numbers of vehicles recorded, sessions undertaken and average number of vehicles recorded per session, plus a breakdown by speed. Whilst the vast majority of vehicles were recorded at speeds of under 40mph, it is of concern that around 1% were at speeds in excess of 50mph.

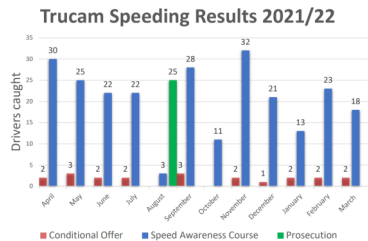


From the numbers of vehicles now being recorded, it seems that the incidence of speeding is increasing but this may be a reflection of concentrating on the two busiest sites. Regrettably, a few of the vehicles reported were known to be residents' vehicles.

No prosecution action follows on from speedwatch activity. Police write to the registered keepers of vehicles reported, reminding them of the speed limit and, in effect, asking them not to do it again. A more strongly worded letter goes out after a subsequent report. Persistent or very fast offenders will normally receive a visit from a police officer and will be targeted by police for prosecution.

We have employed MDC's Community Engagement Team with the police TruCam system throughout the year. That team reported 332 vehicles in April/March, 2021/22. In 2019 it was 294 reported and 165 in 2020. The drivers of these vehicles are dealt with in exactly the same way as if they had been seen and reported by police officers or had gone through speed cameras. Details of the police action taken on the 2021/22 reports are set out here.

The total of 294 differs from that reported by the CET because some do not result in police action, e.g. the vehicle was reported as stolen or it was bearing false number plates. Of those dealt with, the majority resulted in speed awareness courses, offered for speeds up to 42mph. Prosecution follows for speeds over 42mph. Conditional offer applies to persistent offenders or those who have already completed the speed awareness course; the offer is for fine and points or prosecution through the courts. For the coming year, we have increased our employment of the TruCam teams by 50% to 4.5 hours per month to help in our efforts to reduce the incidence of speeding. Increasing our use of TruCam is not a matter of cost, although the Parish Council needs to be aware of budgetary restraints, but of resources at MDC. Quite a few parishes in Maldon District employ TruCam enforcement. The Parish Council remains grateful to the volunteers on the speedwatch team, often out in early mornings and very cold weather.





**WICKI WATCH** Residents are invited to join the Wicki Watch Facebook page, a useful site for recording wildlife species found in and around the village. This in turn helps the WB Biodiversity Project. If you're interested in becoming part of the project, would like to sponsor a bird or bat box or ask for further information, please contact [jane.williams@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org](mailto:jane.williams@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org)

## WICKHAM BISHOPS BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

The Wickham Bishops Biodiversity Project (WBBP), led by Cllr Jane Williams, started in November 2021, through a link with a similar project in Wivenhoe. The aim of the project is to increase biodiversity in Wickham Bishops through Habitat Improvements. We are losing wildlife at an alarming rate and hope to be able to help our wildlife through this project.

We have two initial goals:

- To put up bird/bat/bug boxes within the village community areas and in residents' gardens.
- To identify no-mow areas to be left uncut May-October each year in community areas and to encourage residents to leave areas of long grass and wild flowers in their gardens.

A group of about 12 residents are working to engage with as many residents and organisations as possible within the village to support and take part in the project. Quite a few boxes can be seen around the village.

A launch event for the project was held at the Library in April, when around 60 residents attended, and WBBP members will attend other such events to promote the Project's messages. We have put a small pond and a sand mound for bees in the Library car park.

We are now linked to the EWT Urban Engagement Project and have a Wildlife Champion supported by EWT. The EWT is also offering training in wildflower identification so that we can survey what we have at the start of the project and then at regular intervals. The Parish Council Jubilee commemorations will include planting a wildflower area at the edge of the churchyard.

## FINANCE

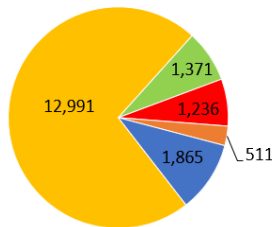
### Accounting Statement 2021-22

Opening Balance	£15,605
Precept	£20,276
Other Receipts	£1,124
Total Expenditure	<u>-£20,796</u>
Closing Balance	<u>£16,209</u>

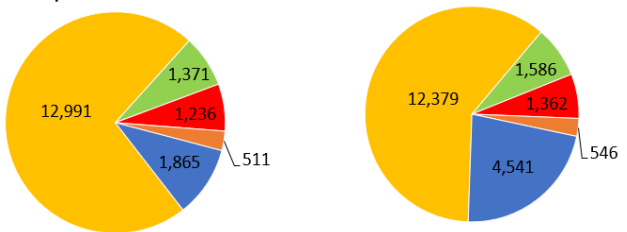
### Accounting Statement 2020-21

Opening Balance	£10,900
Precept	£20,276
Other Receipts	£2,388
Total Expenditure	<u>-£17,959</u>
Closing Balance	<u>£15,605</u>

### Expenditure 2020-21



### Expenditure 2021-22



- Subscriptions, Printing & Administration
- Street Furniture & Grass Cutting
- Neighbourhood Watch & Speedwatch
- Audit & Insurance
- Parish Projects