

# WICKHAM BISHOPS PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT



1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

### Parish Council News

The Parish Council continued to operate with eight Councillors during the year. It is hoped to fill the one vacancy during the year. Monthly surgeries were held regularly in the Library, usually on the third Saturday of the month, when two Councillors and, occasionally, one of the MDC District Councillors, are available to discuss matters of concern to residents. We have had very few visitors in recent months, but we believe this is a useful avenue for residents to contact the Council and will continue the arrangement. We'd be happy to see you there or at our Council meetings on the first Tuesday of the month (except August) at the Village Hall.

The major event of the year was loss of the Appeal lodged by the owners of the land at and behind 9 Church Road. The Government's changes to various planning laws and policies resulted in MDC deciding that it could no longer support its principal reason for refusing the planning application and so notified the Planning Inspectorate, responsible for dealing with the Appeal. The Parish Council was not consulted by MDC at the time this decision was made, in the run-up to Christmas 2024. Further advice was sought from our planning consultants, and a detailed report was sent to the Planning Inspectorate in early January, setting out, in our view, good reasons for maintaining the original decision to refuse the application. The Planning Inspector was, however, not persuaded and outline permission was given for 50 houses on the site. The applicants will now need to apply within three years under a Reserved Matters application for detailed permission on siting, style, layout etc. This will have a major impact on the village and the Parish Council is hoping to make contact with the developers at an early stage in order to provide some input on these details. The Parish Council wishes to place on record its thanks to the members of the Wickham Bishops Action Group who provided much assistance to the Council in opposing this proposal.

The Council wishes to thank Chris Cooke who stood down during the year as our tree preservation adviser.

### New format

This is the first year that we have published the Annual Report in a digital format, available on our website and via a link on Facebook. Some hard copies will be kept at the Library for those who would prefer that format. The main reasons for moving to this method are the environmental impact and cost. Please let us know what you think. We're keen to ensure that in going digital no-one misses out, so if you know of someone who is housebound or disabled or otherwise unable to view a copy, please contact the Parish Clerk who will arrange for one to be delivered.

# Highways and Traffic Calming

Following requests by the Parish Council, an Essex Highways engineer met Councillors and the County Councillor in The Street when a number of issues were discussed. Principal among them was the provision of a pedestrian crossing. Subsequently, a traffic and pedestrian survey was undertaken. Unfortunately, the volume of traffic and numbers of pedestrians using the junction at One Stop did not meet the national criteria for the installation of a pedestrian crossing. This is the second attempt in the past ten years to get a crossing at this point, and it looks like we will have to accept that this is a non-starter, at least for the time being.

Other issues brought to the engineer's attention, included improved HGV weight limit signs and repairs to other signs on the approach to Blue Mills Bridge. These remain outstanding.

There is little else to report here. We are still awaiting progress on the installation of a dropped kerb across the whole frontage of the One Stop car park. We have reported to Essex Highways on a number of occasions the damaged surface at the entrance to the car park. This has been pursued with our Essex County Councillor and we have emphasised that it is a health and safety danger to pedestrians. Hopefully, Essex Highways will take action on this soon. We are liaising with South Essex Parking Partnership on the provision of 'H bar' markings in Gt Totham Road to help prevent parking across driveways and to allow passing places for motorists overtaking the line of parked cars.

## Speedwatch

The Community Speedwatch (CSW) teams continued their efforts to reduce speeding in the village throughout the year. As usual, we have concentrated on the sites in Maypole Road and Witham Road but have also carried out checks at Kelvedon Road, Beacon Hill, Tiptree Road and Church Road, with occasional visits to near the Green Man in Little Braxted.

In total, 88 sessions were held (98 in 2023/24), resulting in 920 vehicles being recorded and reported to police. Regrettably, a few vehicles were recognised as coming from the village. The total recorded was much reduced from last year, with the average per session at 10.45. Last year, 1147 were recorded at an average of 11.70 per session. Of those recorded, 208 were at speeds of 40 mph or higher with 4 recorded at or above 50 mph. The reduction this year might be explained partly by our stopping activity in mid-March whilst seeking clarification from Essex Police on certain follow-up actions. The teams have now resumed their roadside checks.

MDC's Community Engagement Team (CET), employed by the Parish Council for 4.5 hours per month, reported 624 vehicles to police for speeding in Maypole Road and Witham Road, up slightly from last year's 611. Drivers of these vehicles would have been subject to police enforcement action.

## Beacon Hill Rovers FC Girls

During the year the Parish Council were delighted to grant £500 towards new home and away kit and tracksuit tops for the Under 10 Girls team who historically have relied on hand-me-downs from the boys' teams.

A fresh kit will help support Beacon Hill Rovers aims of encouraging as many young female football players as possible to engage in sport.



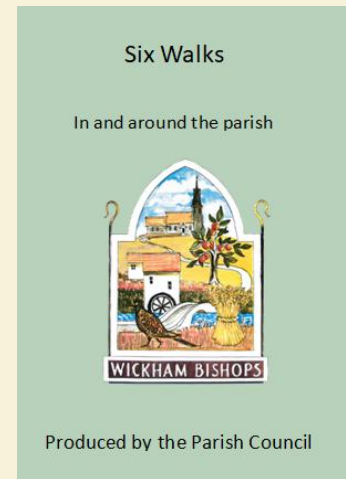
# Six Walks Footpath Booklet

The Parish Council are soon to publish the new Six Walks footpath booklet which incorporates walks of various lengths within Wickham Bishops and adjoining villages, taking in Sparkey Wood, the River Blackwater, Shut Heath Wood and the Rail Trail. There are various points of interest to spot as you go along.

Printed copies of the booklet will be available free of charge from Wickham Bishops Library and can be viewed on WBPC's website:

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

A grant of £750 from Maldon District Council as part of their 'Active Maldon' scheme has made this possible.



## Planning

Maldon District Council consults the Parish Council on all planning applications within the parish or just outside. These are dealt with by the Parish Council or by its Planning Committee. The Parish Council only makes a recommendation as the final decision is made either by MDC planning officers or by their North-West Area Planning Committee. Overall, during the year 2024-25, a total of 35 applications were received (considerably down on the 64 received in 2023-24). Amongst that total were 3 appeals and 7 tree preservation order applications. MDC's decision differed from those of the Parish Council in 11 cases.

The main planning issue concerned the proposed development on land behind 9 Church Road and a full report on this is given in the Parish Council News section. As a result of the Government's changes in the planning rules and guidance, which planning authorities are required to take into account, we can expect to see proposals resubmitted for development of sites previously refused, such as land behind Byron Drive and land adjacent to Grange Road. The Parish Council will continue to oppose development proposals on land it considers unsuitable and outside the development boundary.

## Volunteer Tree Warden

Are you knowledgeable about trees? Maldon District Council ask the Parish Council to comment when residents apply to carry out work on trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders and it's useful to have the opinion of someone who knows about these things.

If you think this is something you could help with, please get in touch with the Clerk (contact details on last page).



## Dog Fouling

Unfortunately, we've seen an increase in dog fouling around the village. PLEASE do clear up after your dog. If you witness dog fouling or are concerned about a particular area, it can be reported to MDC online or by phoning 01621 854477 (between 10am - 4pm). You'll need to provide details of where the offence occurred, the address of the dog owner (if known) and the time of day the offence usually occurs (if known).

# Biodiversity News

The Biodiversity Group has met several times during the year to discuss ways forward and as working parties on projects. The group continues to encourage residents to be mindful of wildlife when strimming and mowing, promoting the value of leaving areas uncut throughout the summer to provide food for insects, birds and mammals. This is important in gardens, verges and open spaces. The wildflowers in Rainbow Field throughout the summer continue to be a source of enjoyment for residents.

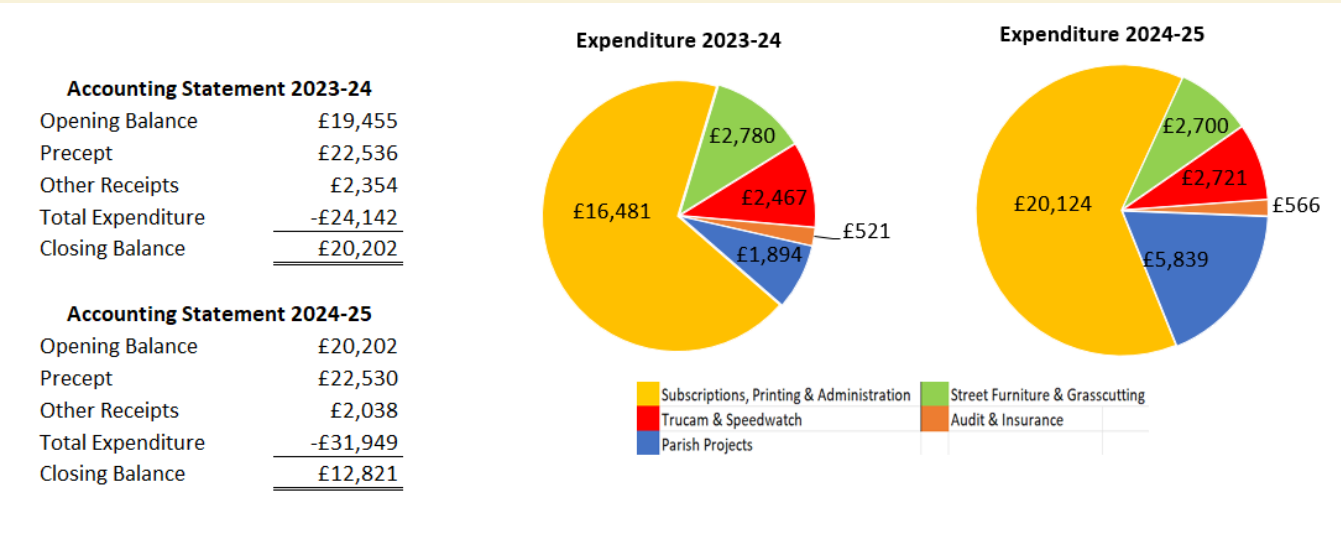
The bird boxes put up around the village have all been used in the previous season and were cleaned in the Spring. The group has supported the Edward Bear Club in building their small wildlife trail near the Church, which is included in the latest Six Walks Footpath booklet (soon to be published).

The value of ivy as a very useful food source (and over-wintering habitat for birds) for bees and other insects, especially late in the season has been highlighted in a recent article in the Parish Magazine. Residents have invited us to help promote wildlife in areas of the village. We continue to monitor and maintain the library wildlife area. The display board in the library has also been updated.

In May the working group met and attended to the avenue of trees in Rainbow field, some of which will be replanted in the Autumn.

# Finance

Apart from the usual inflationary pressures, the Parish Council provided funding for some extras this year - including professional help and advice with regard to the planning appeal for the land rear of Church Road. We also funded an updated Housing Needs Survey for the village to help inform our responses to Planning Applications. In response to public requests, we provided a litter bin in Grange Road, and as mentioned elsewhere we provided a grant for kit to Beacon Hill Rovers' girls under 10's team. A one-off staff pension cost was met, and the Council had to pay increased hire charges for the village hall for our monthly meetings. The Council was able to meet additional costs this year through use of budget and reserves. The precept for 2025-26 sees an increase of roughly 9%, after no increase in the previous year.



# Trees and hedges

A gentle reminder – could everyone keep an eye on any trees on their property that could affect power lines or fall, or cause any other hazard, and keep them trimmed where appropriate. Please keep hedges and shrubs clipped and clear of pavements and roads for the safety of all residents. Thank you.

# Volunteers

The Parish Council are a member of the ECC Salt Bag Partnership which is a way of communities helping themselves during snowy and icy weather. We're always looking for volunteers, so if you have somewhere dry to store a sack of grit and are able to spread some, when needed, on a pavement near you, please get in touch with the Clerk (details on last page).

<b>PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS</b>  Listen to what goes on at the Parish Council or raise an issue that's concerning you. Everyone is welcome to come along to our meetings which take place on the first Tuesday of each month, except August, at 7.30pm. Agendas are displayed on the noticeboard by One Stop, on our website as well as on our Facebook page.	<b>ROADWORKS &amp; DIVERSIONS</b>  It can be a job to keep up with current and planned road works and diversions.  If you register with <a href="#">one.network</a> you'll be able to see upcoming works and keep abreast of disruptions.	<b>MONTHLY SURGERIES</b>  If you'd like to talk to the Parish Council or raise a concern, and are unable to, or would rather not attend a meeting, feel free to come along to one of our monthly surgeries, held on the third Saturday of each month at Wickham Bishops Library from 11am – 12 noon.
<b>PINK RECYCLING SACKS</b>  Don't forget, if you run out of recycling sacks, they're available to collect from Wickham Bishops Library  Opening times are:  Mondays 2pm – 5.30pm  Wednesdays 2pm – 5.30pm  Saturdays 9am – 5pm	<b>HIGHWAYS ONLINE REPORTING</b>  If you spot a problem such as potholes, broken road signs, overgrown vegetation or obstructions, you can report these online at <a href="#">essexhighways.org/tell-us</a>  If there's a risk to public safety, please ring  0345 603 7631	<b>PLANNING APPLICATIONS</b>  There are several ways in which to keep up to date.  Look out for MDC's yellow Site Notices on telegraph poles near to the site where the works are proposed.  Planning Committee and Parish Council Meeting Agendas are posted on our Facebook page with more details and a link to the related documents, architect drawings etc on MDC's website.  Current Planning Applications are posted on our website  <a href="http://www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org">www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org</a>



## Your Councillors and Clerk



Ian Wardrop, Chair



Mandy Mickelsen, Vice Chair



Henry Bass



Peter Bates



Pete Layley



Simon Morgan



Claudia Nappo



Jane Williams

Vacancy



Lorraine Bailey, Clerk

### 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