



Wickham Bishops Parish Council

Notes of Annual Parish Assembly held on Tuesday 5th May 2026 starting at 8pm in St Bartholomew's Church Hall

26A/001 Those Present and Apologies for Absence

There were around 25 people in attendance in total.

26A/002 Chairman's Remarks and Annual Summary

The Chairman welcomed all those present and took the opportunity to present Cllr Henry Bass with a certificate to celebrate his serving 50 years on the Parish Council.

He went on to say that the Parish Council had been pleased to co-opt a new councillor, Rhian Clarke, in May but unfortunately Rhian found that the need to juggle work, family commitments and Council business was such that one had to go. Our thanks to Rhian for her input during her short period with us. Monthly surgeries (held on the third Saturday of the month) continued to be held in the Library, a useful opportunity for residents to speak to Councillors. Cllr Wardrop encouraged residents to drop in if they had anything to raise with the Parish Council, or alternatively attend a full Council meeting, held on the first Tuesday of the month (except August) in the Village Hall.

The forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation did not directly affect parish councils, although there was the possibility that further responsibilities may come our way.

A team of new volunteer residents took up the responsibility of looking after the public footpaths in the village by cutting back overgrown vegetation and hedges and they were thanked for their efforts in maintaining the paths for the benefit of all.

26A/003 District Councillor Report

District Councillor Simon Morgan explained that this was the first year of leadership by Chief Executive Doug Wilkinson. Local Government Reorganisation would see MDC forming a unitary authority with Chelmsford and Brentwood, becoming 'Mid Essex'. Wickham Bishops and Great Totham would combine as a ward to be part of 'Maldon Rural North'. There would be 5 unitary authorities in Essex, shadow elections to take place in 2027, with existing arrangements to disappear by 2028. In September the area Planning Committees would be replaced by one single Committee consisting of 13 members. The majority of decisions on Applications would fall to officers with delegated powers.

26A/004 Planning Matters

Cllr Henry Bass reported that WBPC had been consulted on 48 Planning Applications during the year, 5 of which related to Tree Preservation Orders. In 4 cases MDC did not agree with our recommendation. There were 3 Appeals, one of which was the result of a 'failure to determine' by MDC. The Parish Council had expressed concern over MDC's failure to determine decisions in the prescribed timeline and MDC had referred this to their Complaints Process. There had been no news on the Land to the rear of 9 Church Road development.

Internet of Things ‘gateways’ – Essex & Suffolk Water/Connexin

Cllr Claudia Nappo reported. Last April the Parish Council learned of plans to install IoT ‘gateways’ around the village to support services such as smart water meters. Letters and small ground markers appeared as part of the early rollout. In many towns these gateways are fitted to streetlights, reducing the visual impact but as Wickham Bishops has very few streetlights, the initial proposal involved installing new poles, which the Parish Council and a residents’ action group felt would be out of keeping with the village. Concerns were raised with the provider (Connexin), District and County Councils, and information shared with neighbouring parishes who were next in line for installation. After sustained communication from all parties, an in-person meeting was held in June, including a village walk to demonstrate the challenges. This opened the door to more constructive discussions and alternatives to a “one size fits all” approach. Further meetings in July explored roof and wall-mounted gateways and residents in suitable locations were contacted via Facebook and mail drops, and several gateways have now been installed at Church Green, Beacon Hill, Kelvedon Road, Heathgate and the Village Hall.

A few areas still require hosts — Wellands Close, High Hall, Buckleys Close and Byron Drive — and we will repost details on Facebook for anyone interested.

This has been a strong example of the Parish Council and residents working together to secure a more sensitive, community-led solution and to influence how future rollouts are handled. Grateful thanks go to Mark Roberts and the other members of the Action Group for their efforts in liaising with Connexin.

26A/005 Speedwatch and Traffic Calming Measures

Cllr Ian Wardrop explained that Speedwatch had been active through the year and it was pleasing to note that numbers speeding had dropped dramatically. The Essex Police ‘out of force’ policy whereby vehicles registered outside of Essex were not sent warning letters, had been challenged. A recent spate of collisions near the War Memorial had resulted in the parish council asking Highways to renew the white lines and resurrect the Give Way sign. Highways advised that there had not been sufficient recorded collisions to warrant any further action from them.

26A/006 Biodiversity Project

Cllr Jane Williams reported that the Biodiversity Group continued to meet regularly in the Library and had during the year carried out works on the pond, built bat, bug and bird houses to encourage wildlife, a litterpick had taken place on the playing field and permission had been granted by ECC to create a green living roof on the air raid shelter.

26A/007 Guest Speaker – Prof Jules Pretty on Climate Change

Prof Jules Pretty spoke on climate and nature crises and explained that through storytelling, communities had discovered their capacity to act and influence change. A most uplifting and motivating session. Attendees went away with ‘Thirty Actions for Nature Recovery’.

The formal meeting closed and finished with refreshments and the chance for residents to talk informally.