

# WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

## Environment and Leisure Working Group

### MINUTES

#### ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE WORKING GROUP

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 6pm Village Hall Committee Room

#### **E&L Chair: Cllr Robin Cooke**

1. Agree Minute taker: Offer from Cllr Chenery accepted.
2. **Those Present:** Cllr Cooke, Cllr Chenery, Anne Westover, Jennie Greenhalgh.

**Apologies:** Cllr Creasey, Cllr Horsnell, Niki Fowler, Cllr French, Sonya Exton

3. **Minutes** of the last meeting of Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 24 were accepted as a true record.
4. **Matters Arising:** None raised.

5. **Allotment matters:**

Confirmation that the Allotment Association (AA) now report direct to the parish council. They meet regularly with the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for operational matters and will therefore not attend E&L in the future.

It was noted that the Clerk has informed the tenant of Glebe Plot 39A that his plot tenancy would not be renewed in light of non-compliance with the tenancy Agreement. The AA and Cllr Horsnell have now cleared the rubbish off the plot and Simon Harrington has commenced coppicing the hazel stools. So far he has created a stack of prunings at end of the track. Anne agreed to ask if allotment holders can use these for pea sticks and possible bean poles. Regarding the unused community plot the Working Group expressed concern about the structural stability of the abutting wall and needing access to the hedge and sycamore trees. They noted the AA's preference that this area be used as an open communal use, storage e.g. wood chippings etc. Anne suggested that some fruit trees could be planted there subject to AA support. Anne advised that she can ask the Diocese as owner, to consider the wall safety/structure.

6. **Footpaths** (Footpath Warden):  
Confirmation that the Footpath Warden now reports direct to Full Council and is not expected to attend E&L in the future.
7. **Grounds Maintenance Operative:**  
Cllr Chenery reported that the parish council has agreed to appoint a litter picker. The Council is sorting out risk assessments, PPE and a rota prior to commencement of this role. Cllr Chenery to circulate a list of the areas to be litter picked. The parish council has also agreed to contract out locally for a grounds maintenance operative. Anne enquired as to what contractors will be requested to

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price for this role. Local companies might include Cox Landscapes and she will pass on their contact details to David. Cllr Chenery to circulate the proposed

locations for cutting back overgrowth and grass cutting. The Working Group have previously agreed a preferred list of tasks and queried whether a new operative might attend to the watering of the young trees, planters and bee cafes, amongst other roles identified.

### 8. **Trees update** (Tree Wardens):

Anne Westover had drafted a proposal in her report of September 12th for tree work around the village with an indicative cost of around £4,800 which is posted on WMPC web site. This has not been allowed for in the 2023/24 parish council budget. She subsequently split the proposed works into what may be essential this financial year, costing around £1,200, and what could be deferred until 2025/26. She has since had confirmation that ESSL can prune the holly and box trees in the cemetery (next to Bier House) saving approx £1200. Cllr Chenery advised that the January 2025 full Council will consider the request for around £1,200 and that an allowance for tree work in 2025/26 was included in the draft council budget.

Anne advised that she finally received a call from UK Power Networks stating they had pruned some lower branches off the Holm Oak in the Pightle to clear the power transformer. They hope to return in 2025 to carry out work at height and shape up the tree properly. She has identified the decline of one of the large beech trees in the cemetery (possible Meripilus identified). She advised managing the tree's decline by crown reduction. It overhangs farmland but not a public area and she has been in dialogue with Hayward Farms. She will seek advice and estimates for management.

Some new tree planting has been carried out by the Green Gym volunteers within the village with home grown (tree warden) free trees.

Sonya Exton will contact the primary school regarding their trees overhanging the sports field which obstructs pedestrians. The Working Group felt that costs to prune should be shared when tree management funding is agreed. Anne will ask the adjacent land owner of the large trees overhanging the Pightle northern boundary to discuss a follow up tree inspection. Last inspection was carried out for WMPC in 2019 by E Peters.

### 9. **Tree Management and Safety Inspections:**

Regarding formalised tree inspections Cllr Chenery suggested that Anne prepares a proposal and estimate together for tree survey and inspection work. Broadly a map/plans of council owned trees, a schedule of each tree's location, species and condition and to then carry out formal priority tree inspections and reports with

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indicative costs for any tree maintenance work. Depending on the cost the parish council can assess this proposal and whether alternative quotes would be needed.

### 10. **Cemetery Management matters:**

Anne updated the Group on the work of the Cemetery Working Group, generally meeting once per month. Cllr Chenery advised that the councils work to level graves and carry out seeding was considered urgent and about to commence. The Group noted the councils' recommendations for enhancing the cemetery meadow. Anne has advised (November report) that enhancement with wild flower bulbs and plug planting in addition to an extra cut and rake would enhance and be a low cost option. It also noted that with Christmas impending there may be a lot of relatives leaving artificial flowers, containers and wreathes and it was unclear who is responsible for removing these. Anne has advised that the volunteers could continue doing this once per month but would prefer support from the council. Cllr Chenery to discuss with council.

### 11. **Greenprint Forum and ESC Community Partnership Grants:**

Greenprint Forum are offering small grants of up to £1000 for environmental enhancement projects called Nature First Small Grants Scheme. The Group wondered if this fund could contribute to the costs involved with work to the cemetery beech tree. Anne agreed to ask ESC and if they seem supportive to then draft a grant application form to pass to the Clerk to assess and submit on behalf of the council.

### 12. **Walks Leaflet update (Discover Suffolk):** Anne Westover is progressing this and hopes to have a draft ready for SCC to develop in January 25. Cllr Chenery offered to proof read.

### 13. **Biodiversity Strategy**

Cllr Chenery advised that if Niki Fowler and Sonya could finalise the wording then this could be on the January 2025 full council agenda for consideration of formal adoption of the strategy.

### 14. **Volunteer Status:**

Cllr Chenery updated the Group. Once the council compiles a set of risk assessments we can activate the policy. The Group suggested a get together of those who organise volunteering with some Cllrs to talk through the process. Regarding any first aid training Anne will look into a contact who provides training and report back.

### 15. **Flood Investigation Report:**

This is being reported direct to full council so this Group were just given an update. Recently some of us attended SCC and Environment Agency drop in events from which Cllr Chenery will inform the January council meeting that SCC has asked that the parish council and others can themselves take on some of the actions in

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the Report, such as liaising with landowners about natural flood management, such as ditching, new hedges/trees and pond creations.

### **16. River Deben/Deben Climate Centre**

Arthur Stansfield is part of the testing team with the Deben Climate Centre and Ufford Parish Council. Anne will ask Arthur if its possible to share the testing results with the Climate Change Working Group.

### **17. Climate Change Working Group:**

This reports direct to the council. The group has met twice, recently, to plan an interactive evening event on 31 January 25.

### **18. Any Other Business**

Cllr Chenery asked that this groups Terms of Reference be reviewed at its next meeting.

. Meeting ended 8.00 pm