

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIR: Cllr IVOR FRENCH

MINUTES of the Meeting of Wickham Market Parish Council held on
Monday 19 January 2026 at 19:00



FC25: 138 Present from the Council: Cllr I French (Chair) Cllr Day Cllr Noble (ESC)
Cllr Chenery Cllr S French A Besly (Clerk)
Cllr Cooke Cllr Horsnell
Cllr Creasey Cllr Jenkinson

FC25: 139 Present from the Public: 6

FC25: 140 Open Public Forum session (3 minutes per person):

There were a number of requests to speak: *(Post meeting notes have been added in blue italic in response to the questions)*

- 1 A member of the public read a pre prepared statement expressing concern that memorial trees would be removed. This statement can be found at annex 1. The Clerk assured the meeting that there were no plans to remove or relocate trees in the cemetery. There was a suggestion that more memorial trees could be planted in the older part of the cemetery at the back.
- 2 Another member of the public raised a number of concerns very quickly. This is an attempt to record the salient points:
 - Why should the cemetery be cost neutral? When was this decision made? *(The decision to make the cemetery cost neutral predates the current Clerk's tenure. The reason is that there are a number of families who are not resident in Wickham Market but have their loved ones interred there. The cost of the cemetery is borne by the precept tax on Wickham Market residents. WMPC has chosen to eliminate this part of the precept tax burden if possible)*
 - Objection to the precept being used to maintain footpaths *(Parish Councils have a recognised role in respect of Public Rights of Way [PROWs] in cooperation with the highways authority SCC. SCC only maintain footpaths to a minimum standard which is usually two cuts per year. This is not considered sufficient by WMPC on the routes to school and so maintain these to a higher standard)*
 - Monthly meetings are good but may be confusing if it is not the same agenda each time. *(The reason that it is suggested that agendas vary with for example, financials every other month, is to keep the meetings as efficient as possible. This minimises repetitive reporting, allowing more time for decision making.)*
 - Objects to disbanding the E&L working group. *(With monthly Full Council meetings there is more capacity to discuss important environmental matters at Full Council and in public.)*
 - Councillors should pick up more responsibilities. (It was not clear what these should be)
 - Village Hall Modernisation has no budget, why. How much is it costing, are the funds in place? If not, why is design and planning going ahead? *(WMPC are optimistic that SZC will provide a grant, however this will not be confirmed until plans are more advanced with approved planning permission and confirmed tenders.)*
- 3 Another member of the public also raised concerns over the Parish Council planning process. Then read from a prepared statement which would be sent to the Clerk. The salient points noted at the meeting include:
 - If the Council has declared a Climate Emergency, why are they closing the E&L working group and "handing over the cemetery to the Clerk"? *(Additional capacity at monthly Full Council meetings creates the ability for important environmental and climate proposals to be debated in public by the Full Council. WMPC is not "handing over the cemetery to the Clerk". The Parish Council require the Clerk to carry out certain tasks on their behalf. The Clerk already manages the cemetery internments and the maintenance contractor. The cemetery management plan clarifies this and proposes that the Clerk [on behalf of the Council] has overall responsibility for the cemetery.*

The plan is very clear that the volunteers are a valued group and should work more closely with the council)

- There was a general background report on cemetery activity over the years. This covered activity of the cemetery working party and history going back to pre 2012.
 - Unhappy with the perceived criticism of a lack of positive and planned management by the parish council. *(In recent years the Parish Council have not taken an active role in cemetery planning. The report identifies a few examples which could easily be managed effectively in the future with collaboration.)*
 - A general issue with trees was raised. *(There is a suggestion that the older part of the cemetery could become a memorial woodland. Any decision to progress this will have to come before full Council.)*
 - There was a question as to why the integrated grounds maintenance programme instigated by the Clerk was not completed. *(The proposal was instigated by the Clerk in December 2022 (E&L 12 Dec 22 item 13.2). The definition went through several iterations and became more detailed and complex, adding additional work for a contractor. As a result, a review of cemetery cost drivers took place with our maintenance contractor and was presented to full council in September 2024 who approved up to £3k spend to address some of the elements that increase maintenance costs. FC24:87). This activity was recorded as necessary in the draft integrated maintenance programme; it was simply instigated as a stand alone one off exercise which did deliver savings which can be reinvested in the cemetery.*
 - Cllr Mallinder's letter of November 2020 was referenced regarding allowing grass to grow in older parts of the cemetery. *(No proposal to do this has been brought to the council over the last 5 years.)*
 - There was concern that the Emergency Plan was not yet complete and should take priority over the cemetery. *(The Emergency Plan working group [not the Clerk] is continuing to develop the plan.)*
- 4 A member of the public raised further comments:
- About an email, but it was not clear which email this referred to.
 - The Village Hall car park needs to be in the modernisation plan *(This is agreed, but additional funding will need to be sought.)*
 - Pleased that the cemetery trees will stay
 - The Parish Council does not take into account residents views and does not use volunteers effectively. *(The Parish Council has a successful and productive relationship with numerous volunteers and volunteer organisations. It is not clear which resident's views are not taken into account. A recent response to a resident request to advertise meetings on social media has taken effect this month.)*
- 5 A member of the public who could not be present asked the council to consider how available funding could be used to improve bus services. Also, how the council intend to canvas public opinion. The council agreed to look into this and use social media and posters to canvas opinion.

FC25: 141 Apologies for Absence: Cllr Dempsey-Gray, Cllr Nicoll (SCC)

FC25: 142 Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda: None

FC25: 143 Proposal to approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 17 November 2025.
All Agreed

FC25: 144 Receive Committee and Working Group Minutes

144.1 Finance & General Purpose Committee 5 January 2026 *Published* This included the budget, precept and 3 year plan

144.2 Environment and Leisure Working Group 8 December 2025 *Published* This included trees and tree safety

144.3 Village Hall Modernisation Committee 11 December 2025 *Published* Progress report included

FC25: 145 Suffolk County Councillor's Report (SCC): None Received

FC25: 146 East Suffolk Councillor's Report (ESC): *Published* Cllr Noble added the following comments:

- Recycling: there will be new bins distributed soon
- Cllr Noble offered to host a talk about what can now be recycled
- She noted that SZC are offering to pay for Speed Indicators. Do Wickham Market require another one? Cllr Chenery will contact SZC for details

Questions

- It was noted that free WiFi would be available, but Wickham Market is not included

**Cllr
Chenery**

- Can small electrical items be recycled. Yes, the bin collection vehicles have a cage to put small items and surplus plugs and wires in for recycling. These can be left on the top of any bin for collection.
- Cllr Noble expressed concern over the disconnect between volunteers and the council and cited several parishes in her ward that work with volunteers effectively.
- Do other parishes have a volunteer liaison?
- Question on a dredging tax. Cllr Noble will look into this.

FC25: 147 Chair's Report: *Published*. There was concern over recent thefts in Wickham Market which the Police are investigating.

FC25: 148 Clerk's Report: *Published* There were no questions

FC25: 149 Finance Report January 2026

149.1 Review Finance Report and Payments Schedule: *Published* There was a question on the website cost. The Clerk confirmed that £4,500 has been received in grants of the total cost of £6,875.

149.2 Review Bank Reconciliation: *Published*

149.3 Review Summary Financial Statement: *Published*

149.4 Review latest forecast for 2025-26 outturn: *Published*

FC25: 150 Proposal to approve updated three-year plan *Published All Agreed*

FC25: 151 Proposal to approve the budget 2026-27 *Published All Agreed*

FC25: 152 Proposal to approve the precept requirement 2026-27 *Published All Agreed* Clerk to apply **Clerk**

FC25: 153 Proposal to agree that WMPC should ask SCC is they would be willing to transfer the Simons Cross Playing Field from SCC **All Agreed**, however there were concerns over the cost of managing this area. Clerk to pursue with SCC **Clerk**

FC25: 154 Deputy Clerk's Report: Includes Markets, allotments and Cemetery. *Published*

It was agreed that Leanne has done an excellent job in developing the markets.

It was noted that Wickham Market Partnership have identified some updates required on the new website. WMP will send a list of suggested amendments.

It was noted that the Community Payback team have done an excellent job at the Glebe allotments and the question was raised as to whether they could remove rabbit spiral guards from some hedging along Chapel Lane. The clerk will raise this with the area coordinator. **Clerk**

FC25: 155 Village Hall Modernisation Report *Published*

155.1 Proposal to appoint Simon Harrington to the Village Hall Modernisation Committee. **All Agreed**

155.2 Proposal to Approve Final Village Hall Concept Design Layout and Drawings listed on drawing register dated 16-12-25. Planning Application Submitted 12th December 2025. After some discussion **All Agreed**. The Council would like to thank Cllr John Horsnell for his dedicated hard work to get the project to this point.

FC25: 156 Footpaths Report *Published*

At this point a member of the public requested to speak. The Chair chose to use his discretion and closed the meeting.

The member of the public stated that public footpaths are owned by the landowner and wanted to know what powers the PC uses to maintain them. *(The Highway Authority (SCC) has vested rights over the surface of all PROWs and has a duty to maintain them. The Parish Council has a recognised role in respect of PROWs in cooperation with the highways authority and use their General Power of Competence as the power to maintain them. The landowner has a duty to prevent encroachment of vegetation or obstruction of the PROW.)*

She also raised an objection about the Parish Council paying to have some footpaths maintained when this is Suffolk County Council's responsibility.

Meeting Reopened

FC25: 157 Allotments Report *Published* There were no questions. It was noted that the Police are investigating the theft from Simons Cross sheds.

FC25: 158 Cemetery

158.1 Proposal to approve the Cemetery Management Plan *Published*

There was significant debate over this item and a recognition of the volunteer's concern. It was noted that:

- WMPC should nurture volunteers
- WMPC agreed several years ago prior to the current Clerk that the cemetery should aim to be cost neutral
- The cemetery costs have exceeded income since at least 2012
- WMPC aim to safeguard volunteers by ensuring they are covered by the Council's insurance policy. To do this, the volunteers need to follow a simple sign on process

and outline what they are going to do beforehand once they have been adequately briefed at the "toolbox talk"

- Each party say the other has a problem so both sides need to come together.
- WMPC is responsible for safety of volunteers working on council land.
- Cllr Jenkinson highlighted that being the volunteer Chair of the PC can be a stressful role particularly in situations like this.
- The role of volunteers should be discussed at the next meeting

The proposal then came to a vote. 4 Cllrs voted to accept the proposal as it is, 4 were against accepting now but wanted to review at the next meeting. **The Chair used his casting vote to postpone the proposal to the next meeting.**

- It was agreed that WMPC should invite interested parties to discuss the plan and roles face to face before the next meeting.

158.2 Proposal for restoration of Bier Trolley and tools *Published All Agreed*

At this point the meeting had run for 2 hours. It was proposed that standing order 3) x. be suspended to allow further business to be transacted. **All Agreed**

FC25: 159 Proposal to move to monthly Parish Council meetings *Published* The proposal paper was *Clerk agreed in its entirety by all.* Clerk to arrange

FC25: 160 Reporting items for the next meeting. Suggestions included:

- A "Myth Buster" to clarify things such as recycling rules
- Re-present Cemetery Maintenance plan
- Clarify the role of volunteers
- Approve ongoing maintenance of FP9 and Little Lane for 2026 (as it is not WMPC responsibility)
- There will also be a number of other statutory items

FC25: 161 Date of next meeting: 16 February 2026

Meeting Closed at 21:20

Signed.

Cllr Ivor French, Chair. Date.

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