

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2025-2026



Letter from the Chair of Wickham Market Parish Council

I'm certain we would be quite surprised if we added up the hundreds of hours our eight volunteer parish councillors contributed during 2025-2026. The time commitment involved in serving as a parish councillor can vary, and their volunteering includes attending meetings, engaging with residents, dedicating time to community projects such as modernising our Village Hall, and liaising with Sizewell C regarding traffic calming measures for our village roads. With many planning applications underway, including proposals for solar parks in neighbouring villages, our team of volunteers are doing their best to protect the integrity of Wickham Market.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their support, expertise, and good humour over the past 12 months.

Our public spaces, footpaths, cemetery, and green areas continue to be enhanced and cared for so everyone can enjoy and utilise them. I'd like to thank everyone who helps keep our village litter-free.

I hope you've had the opportunity over the past twelve months to participate in some of the many activities and events that happened in Wickham Market. Thank you to everyone who attended or had a stall at our four seasonal markets. They have become valued fixtures in the village calendar, and with entertainment and a good mix of business and community stalls, they have become a central place to meet others as well as a wonderful way to purchase unique, handmade products and support micro businesses.

The Village Show and the Wickham Market and District Gardening Club Show held at the Village Hall brought people of all ages and backgrounds together, and the Parish Council will continue supporting events in the village.

You might not have considered becoming a parish councillor before; your skills and enthusiasm could be just what our village needs as we continue to serve our residents, welcome new residents, and attract visitors to Wickham Market.

To find out more, contact Al Besly, Wickham Market Parish Clerk, clerk@wickhammarket-pc.gov.uk

Warm regards

Ivor French
Chair, Wickham Market Parish Council

ivor.f@wickhammarket-pc.gov.uk

Looking after places that people use every day



Wickham Market Cemetery: safer, tidier, and more sustainable

The Parish Council continues with routine cemetery management and memorial safety checks. Grounds maintenance is contracted out for tasks such as grass cutting and tree pruning. Our dedicated cemetery management volunteers also look after bulb planting, litter management, biodiversity, and the maintenance of bird and bat boxes.



The historic bier house, built to house cemetery equipment, is receiving maintenance, as is the bier trolley used to transport coffins from the church to the cemetery.



Allotments: supporting growers and biodiversity

Recent work on the allotments has involved free labour from HM Prisons' Community Payback Scheme. This effort has revitalised several abandoned allotment plots. Both of our allotment gardens (Glebe and Simon's Cross) are now fully booked, with a waiting list.

Hedges around the allotments have been tidied, and a new community orchard has been established at Glebe.

**Footpaths and Greens:
easier to access, easier to enjoy**

There are two main footpaths through the village: Little Lane, which runs from the top of Broad Road down to Border Cot Lane, and Footpath 9, which runs from George Lane to Spring Lane. Maintenance of these routes to the school has been contracted out to ensure that encroaching nettles and brambles are cleared.

Footpath 9 has recently had its hedges and vegetation trimmed back to expose the original tarmac surface, making it easier for mobility and families walking to school.

**Spring Cleaning:
making our village look good**



Following a grant from East Suffolk Council Economic Development, we have organised a general spring clean around the most frequently used parts of our village. This includes the bus shelter, the play area, and several road signs along the main route in and out of the village.



Markets and Community Events

Our four seasonal markets continue to grow in popularity, with strong participation from local charities and groups. We have 30-40 stalls, along with entertainment and public involvement. This benefits the local economy and enhances community spirit. Building on this, we are reshaping our markets to emphasise a community atmosphere, outsourcing set-up and take-down to stabilise operations, and creating an event for the whole community rather than just a market.

Ahead of the Tour of Britain passing through the area, we hosted a community cycling day on The Hill with free bike health checks, electric bike demonstrations, live music, and family activities - promoting active travel and wellbeing.



**Village Hall Modernisation:
steady progress on a vital asset**

The Village Hall Modernisation Committee met regularly throughout the year, submitting written progress reports to Full Council - ensuring strong governance while the design and funding work advanced.

During 2025-26, we worked on funding routes, floor space options, and indicative timelines; a refreshed business plan and administrative support model are being developed to help the volunteer management team succeed after modernisation. Phase one of the modernisation now has funding agreed, pending us meeting milestones. This will deliver a fully functional community centre.

As the building modernisation progresses, we will start phase two, which will improve parking and drainage for all users of the community area's facilities.

What this means for residents:
a warmer, more versatile building, better accessibility, and a facilities mix that supports groups of all ages.



The remaining footpaths in and around the village are managed by our footpath warden, who regularly maintains the surface and installs footpath direction signs.

Our two playing fields at Simon's Cross and the Village Hall now benefit from an enhanced mowing regime, providing a better surface for our football clubs and other users who walk across or around them.

The Church Pightle Green is mown by our contractors but also benefits from general management by our dedicated green volunteers.



Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan

Looking after our environment through commenting on Planning Applications and maintaining open spaces and rural paths

The Planning Committee continued reviewing applications and submitting comments promptly, ensuring development stays true to our village's character.

Decisions and representations are guided by the Neighbourhood Plan, which adds local policy detail to the Local Plan and now carries significant weight in applications, ensuring landscape, heritage, access, and climate considerations remain a priority.

What this means for residents: better-shaped growth, protection of valued spaces, and a stronger voice in planning decisions.

Traffic, Safety, and Sizewell C Mitigation

The Parish Council is advocating for additional traffic calming measures in the centre of the village and extensions to reduce speed limits where suitable.

We continued to monitor highway and rail disruptions related to major regional projects, raising concerns about closures and requesting mitigations through our County and District channels.

Ongoing liaison regarding Sizewell C impacts, particularly construction traffic, remains a priority. The Council is pushing for tangible mitigation in and around Wickham Market to make the village centre safer for pedestrians.

Climate Action and Biodiversity

Climate Action Group reports were featured in Council business during the period, alongside the development of a Biodiversity Strategy and the embedding of climate considerations into decision-making.

We also supported community-level engagement - talks, practical tips, and signposting - so residents can participate in carbon reduction and nature recovery.



Volunteering and Community Partnerships

Volunteers continued to make a significant impact: councillors, cemetery working parties, tree and footpath wardens, Allotment Association, and the Village Hall management team, among many others.

The Council's adopted approach to volunteer management – toolbox talks, risk assessments, and a simple sign-in register helps keep every volunteer safer and better supported.



Scan here to see the new website



Digital Communication and Accessibility

We maintained a consistent schedule for publishing agendas, minutes, and reports online, allowing residents to monitor decisions and expenditures. A new web URL for the Parish Council was set up, along with dedicated email accounts for each parish councillor.




Parish News and a New Website

This friendly, magazine-style publication is produced bi-monthly and provides information about village services and events.

We have also developed a new Visit Wickham Market website that showcases village history, activities, attractions, walks, a business directory, and an events guide.

Social Media

Follow our new social media channels to catch all the latest updates, stories, and happenings from around the village. Don't miss a moment – join the community online today!

-  Wickham Market Parish Council Suffolk
VisitWickhamMarket
-  Wickham Market Parish Council updates
-  wickhammarketparishsocials
Visit Wickham Market

How is this work financed?

The receipts and payments summary for the year ending 31 March 2026

RECEIPTS

Precept	99,000.00
Grants Received	11,215.50
Allotments	4,482.41
Cemetery	9,497.00
Market	3,100.06
Other	9,663.38
VH Modernisation funding	11,665.27

Receipts Total 148,623.62

PAYMENTS

Salaries, PAYE, Pension	64,294.20
Training	392.00
Administration	9,196.66
Wickham Market News	7,299.60
Insurance	4,430.08
Maintenance	14,959.75
Legal and Professional Fees	5,733.00
Grants Paid	1,200.00
Other	4,652.67
Miscellaneous	16,417.22
VAT	6,528.44

Payments Total 135,103.62

Receipts Less Payments 13,520.00

The main contributors to the surplus of £13.5k are:

1. Village Hall contributions to professional fees not yet invoiced to the PC £5.3k
2. Tree work not undertaken £5k
3. Fewer grant requests to WMPC £2.8k

Governance and Audit

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 establish the responsibilities of all local councils regarding their accounting and auditing procedures. Each year, the council's financial accounts and statements are examined by an independent internal auditor appointed by the council. Paul 2025 to 26; this was he listened large.

The Parish Council is also required to complete an annual governance and accountability return, which includes the findings of the internal auditor along with the governance statements and financial statements. The return is submitted to an independent external auditor appointed by the Audit Commission for review.

What's next

(highlights for 2026)



Play Area: We are planning more maintenance plus a targeted all-weather surface and improved access routes, to make it more user-friendly during the winter months.

Paths and Mobility: We will continue to work on making footpaths clean, tidy and accessible.

Playing Field Boundary: We will work on habitat-sensitive edge management and a 'dead hedge' screen to protect the wildlife corridor.

Community Safety and Resilience: We will explore a Neighbourhood Watch pilot and continue flood risk liaison with Suffolk County Council Highways, the Environment Agency, and local landowners.

Village Hall: We will enter the construction phase from September 2026 and draft a refreshed business plan to support the Village Hall's long-term viability.

Events and Business Support: We will continue to expand the community element of our seasonal markets and work on ideas to support local small businesses.

Traffic: We will press for a 20mph speed limit through our village centre and other practicalities tied to Sizewell C traffic.

The high level budget to support these activities for 2026-27

RECEIPTS		
Precept	120,000	This is a charge of £108.86pa for a band D property, increasing by £1.63 per month from last year. This is still significantly less than surrounding small towns that range from £116 to £192 for a band D property. Source: https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Council-Tax/2025-26-Town-and-Parish-Precept-Requirements.pdf
Grants Received	5,000	Mostly from East Suffolk Council
Allotments	4,400	Allotment charges
Cemetery	10,000	Anticipated internment fees
Market	3,000	Anticipated market trader fees
Other	11,131	VAT reclaim and investment interest.
Receipts Total	153,531	

PAYMENTS		
Salaries	70,000	Includes additional £5k for extra resource
Training	1,152	Training for Councillors and employees
Administration	7,432	Includes consumables, subscriptions, websites and audit
Wickham Market News	8,100	News magazine costs
Insurance	3,700	Parish Council general insurance
Maintenance	23,440	All contracted out maintenance including Cemetery, playing fields and some footpaths
Legal and Professional	8,000	Professional fees for Village Hall Modernisation
Grants Paid	4,000	Grants available for community organisations
Miscellaneous	15,850	Includes 3 year plan activities such as: New Accounting system, play area refresh, community engagement events, market and allotment operating costs
Other	5,840	Including rent, water and play area checks
VAT (reclaimable)	4,526	Reclaimable VAT on purchases
Payments Total	152,040	

Are you a practical, enthusiastic person who can make things happen?

Maybe your work background gives you the skills to help the village community of Wickham Market continue to thrive and remain a fantastic place to live, work and visit.

Please consider becoming a councillor of Wickham Market Parish Council.

To find out more, contact Al Besly, Wickham Market Parish Clerk, clerk@wickhammarket-pc.gov.uk

Wickham Market Parish Council

Schedule of Dates for Ordinary Meetings for 2026-27

Ordinary meetings are held in the Village Hall Committee Room commencing at 19:00. Members of the public are invited to attend all ordinary meetings.

Please note that the location and possibly the dates may change in the autumn of 2026 due to the modernisation of the Village Hall.

Full Council	Finance & General Purpose Committee	Village Hall Modernisation Committee
<i>Usually Meet on:</i> 3rd Monday Each Month	<i>Usually Meet on:</i> 1st Monday Alternate Months	<i>Usually Meet on:</i> 2nd Tuesday at 18:00 Each Month
18 May 2026 (APCM)		Tuesday, 12 May 2026
Monday, 15 June 2026		Tuesday, 9 June 2026
Monday, 20 July 2026	Monday, 6 July 2026	Tuesday, 14 July 2026
August No Meeting		Tuesday, 11 August 2026
Monday, 21 September 2026	Monday, 7 September 2026	Tuesday, 8 September 2026
Monday, 19 October 2026		Tuesday, 13 October 2026
Monday, 16 November 2026	Monday, 2 November 2026	Tuesday, 10 November 2026
Monday, 21 December 2026		Tuesday, 8 December 2026
Monday, 18 January 2027	Monday, 4 January 2027	Tuesday, 12 January 2027
Monday, 15 February 2027		Tuesday, 9 February 2027
Thursday, 18 March 2027	Monday, 1 March 2027	Tuesday, 9 March 2027
Monday, 19 April 2027		Tuesday, 13 April 2027
17 May 2027 APCM	Monday, 10 May 2027	Tuesday, 11 May 2027

Planning Committee

Meets as required and members of the public may attend

Sizewell C Committee

Meets as required and members of the public may attend

Staffing and Personnel Committee

Meets as required and are confidential

Annual Parish Meeting

Friday 09 April 2027

Climate Action Working Group

Meets as required

Recent work on the allotments has revitalised several abandoned allotment plots.

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PARISH
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