

Annual Report from Chair of Wickhambrook Parish Council

The Annual Parish Meeting gives an opportunity to look back over the previous twelve months activities.

Meetings:

The Parish Council has held:

- 7 Ordinary meetings
- 3 Extra-ordinary meetings
- 5 meetings of the Estates Committee

Finance:

Made 244 payments for services to the parish, including:

- Transferring £2135.53 to Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre (recycling grant)
- Grants to local organisations:
 - Carnival Committee (Fete & Flower Show) £ 221.76
 - Repairs to Memorial Clock £1300.00
 - Warm Winter Wednesdays £ 63.50
- In Kind Grants (as part of parish council grounds keeping):
 - Wickhambrook Outdoor Bowls Club £1023.46
 - Wickhambrook Tennis Club £ 320.00
 - Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre £2170.00
- Donated £150.00 to the following Charities
 - Rural Coffee Caravan (In memory of our Late District and County Councillor, Mary Evans)
 - Royal British Legion

And received the following grants:

- Locality Funding for development of Neighbourhood Plan £3497.00
- Locality Funding from County Councillor Bobby Bennett £1000.00 (extension of planings to Footpath 25).

The cost of maintaining grounds and assets in the parish last year included:

- Grounds Contract £11,805.00
- Six Acres £ 353.27
- Tree Surgery £ 70.00
- Cemetery & Churchyard £ 1347.37
- Play Equipment £ 1135.67
- MUGA & Skate Park £ 490.00
- Greens £ -
- Bin & Dog waste £ 880.92

Welcome:

We've welcomed two new councillors, Andrea Grimes and Linda Smith, and David Di Giulio as a lay member on the Estates Committee.

Farewell:

Our thanks go out to John Norton, who retired as a lay member to Estates Committee last year, after many years service to the Parish Council as both Councillor and Lay member, and also to Sandy Thwaite, who served as a Councillor from September 2019.

We had sad news at the end of January, when we learned of the death of our former District and County Councillor, Mary Evans.

Mary was a faithful public servant for many years and will be sadly missed by a huge number of people in all our communities. She did so much for Wickhambrook, working tirelessly for our community and supporting the parish council in a wide range of projects for the benefit of Wickhambrook Residents. Our thanks go out to Mary.



The Parish Council donated £100 to Rural Coffee Caravan in Memory of her.

Further sad news in March, when we heard that George Woods, to whom the parish council had awarded the Alf Hick's Crystal Biscuit Barrel at its January meeting in recognition of the joy he had brought to residents of the parish with his Christmas Lights each year, had died.

Projects:

Our major project over the past year has been preparing the [Neighbourhood Plan](#), which has included:

- Reporting on feedback from the consultation on Site Master Planning
- Feeding back findings from those surveys at the Fete and Flower Show in July
- Identifying Community Actions which will form part of Neighbourhood Plan
- Responding to West Suffolk's consultation on its Draft Local Plan

This has been a massive and detailed project, and thanks go out to Cllr Tracey Turner for leading the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, Secretaries Richard Byers & Roger Merry, and the group members, Diana Carroll, Emily Bayman, Jamie Green, Maro Limnios, Penny Bayman, Sandra Law, Sue Sternberg and Tara Hayden.

Highways:

Unfortunately, despite a traffic survey commissioned by the parish council, we have so far been unable to convince Suffolk County Council Highways that there is a case for reducing the speed limit at Wickham Street from 40mph to 30mph. Our County Councillor, Bobby Bennett, is still working to resolve this for us.

Signage for the Quiet Lanes designated in 2022 was installed with thanks to Cllr Mike Lavelle and his team of volunteers.

In November, the parish council agreed (if sufficient volunteers could be recruited) to establish a volunteer team focussed on flooding issues and a Community Speed watch group, and to set aside a small budget for a parish day to include low level work on highways (cutting back vegetation around signs etc).

Planning:

18 planning applications were notified to and considered by the parish council over in the past year (including one appeal to the planning inspector).

Other projects

and activities in the past year have included:

- Ongoing transcription of historic cemetery records (thanks to Anne Shaw)
- A stand at Wickhambrook Fete and Flower Show
- Drainage of pond at Coltsfoot Green
- Purchase of catering and support equipment for loan to village organisations (with thanks to Cllr Sarah Pugh, who grant funded this from her locality budget)
- A survey of the memorials in Wickhambrook Cemetery (of 236 tested, 13 were found to be in need of repair)
- Nine volunteer mornings tidying the cemetery
- Purchase of a new Parish Notice Board at Shop Hill (the old Notice Board will be re-purposed)
- Three litter picks (with thanks to Mary Jolland and Barbara Merritt of WMSC)
- Planting of a new hedge line between the cemetery and cemetery road (with thanks to Cllr Bobby Bennett for facilitating the funding for this from Highways).
- Identifying additional funding through Wayleave £
- Approaches to SCC and Havebury to negotiate transfer of parcels of land at Bury Road Pocket Park to the parish council, which maintains it.
- Providing kits to 1st Wickhambrook Beavers who've installed eight bird boxes in the Cemetery

We also collaborated with a wide range of groups and individuals to bring about further improvements to the parish, including:

- Suffolk Public Rights of Way – extension of the hard surfacing on Footpath 25 to the base of Six Acres.
- Suffolk County Council Highways – Installation of the new Bus Shelter on Cemetery Road
- A team of volunteers in the parish (coordinated by Amanda Lavelle) who put on Warm Winter Wednesdays in January and February, hosted at the WI Hall; and
- Mary Jolland leading the Cemetery Tidying days and volunteers, Kathy Cordy, Mel Karunaratne, Mike Lavelle, Roger Medley and Jo Pask.

Thanks go out to our lay members on the Estates Committee, Mary Jolland, Kevin Grimes and Roger Medley, our Councillors, Paul Couzens, Mel Karunaratne and Tracey Turner, our County Councillor Bobby Bennett and District Councillor Sarah Pugh.

Thanks also to Peter Vince, who looks after the Defibrillator at the Fire Station, Anne Shaw, who has done so much work on transcribing our cemetery records, our Web master, Maria Sumner of Mdsign, and the Trustees at Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre, without whom our lives would be much harder!

Please forgive me if there's anyone I've missed!



Mike Lavelle – Chair of Wickhambrook Parish Council.