

## **2024 Annual Parish Meeting Reports**

### **West Wickham Parish Council -Chairman's Report**

Welcome residents, members, officers and representatives to the Annual West Wickham Parish Council Meeting. It has been an honour to preside as chair of the parish council for the last two years, so I would like to express my gratitude to all my fellow councillors for the trust they have put in me, as well as thank them for the time and effort they have contributed freely and generously to their roles as Parish Councillors. I would also like to thank both County Councillor Henry Batchelor and District Councillor Geoff Harvey for their time and effort in supporting this council with welcome advice, information and support throughout the year, and of course I thank our Parish Clerk, Jenny Richards, for her continued experience and professionalism.

We met formally six times over the 2023/2024 year in the Village Hall, typically on the 4th Monday of every alternate month, to discuss a wide range of topics such as planning applications, finances, the children's playground, the King's Coronation, footpaths and rights of way, traffic and the Village Hall. Residents are welcome and encouraged to attend our meetings and invited to participate in our activities.

2023/2024 was another very busy year for us. We started the year by celebrating the coronation of King Charles with a Big Lunch event that was well received and attended, with friends and families from neighbouring villages joining in. We raised funds together with the Village Hall Management Committee for solar panels and batteries for the Village Hall, which was installed in September. We saw Trevor Hall stepping down as Chair of the Village Hall management committee with Martin Kerslake stepping up, ongoing repairs and maintenance to the Village's play equipment and playground as well as the refreshing of various signs in the village and its surrounding countryside and an LHI application for a radar speed sign. We also have faced a planning application for a farm-based Anaerobic Digester on the Streetly Hall Estate, and continue to do so, and heard about plans for the re-development of the Horseheath Lodge Estate.

While we continue to see a rising rate of inflation, we have asked for a modest 3.2% increase to the annual precept to bring it to £13,000 p.a. to allow us to meet the parish's ongoing commitments, as well as set aside some contingency funds. Although we had an excess of £3,141 for the 2023/2024 year, much of this is anticipated to be spent in the replacement of the lower fence of the playground and the rotting wood which forms part of the playground's equipment.

The council would like to thank the editors of the Village Voice, Andrew Morris and Anna Fairhead, along with other contributors and helpers as well as the contributors to the Parish website. The Village Voice and the Parish website continues to be the main source of local news, events and resources for the village, with the WhatsApp West Wickham Community allowing members to share information, news and photos, exchange items, and support each other.

Our Village Hall remains a valuable and important community asset, so the council would also like to thank the Village Hall Management Committee who maintain and run the Village Hall. I also would like to give a BIG thank you to Trevor Hall for the hard work and enthusiasm he brought while Chair of the committee and wish him a relaxing second retirement. The improvements to the Village Hall while he was chair are the biggest I have seen since it was built and are there for everyone to see.

Lastly, the council would like to extend its gratitude to the small army of volunteers within the community that also contribute their time, effort and money to provide events such as the

coffee mornings, the Hub nights. Not to forget the litter pickers and gardeners that help to keep our village tidy and beautiful. The community is grateful.

Alex Schuilenburg, Chair of the Parish Council.

## **West Wickham Village Hall - Chairman's Report April 2024**

### **Summary of Items contained in the Report**

- The Management Committee has met regularly.  
All trustees are entered on the Charity Commissioners' website  
All trustees make significant contribution to running the hall.
- All equipment has been inspected and relevant certificates are up to date.
- The financial position is good with adequate reserves of money.
- A contract cleaner continues to provide cleaning services.
- The Parish Council has managed the installation of the photo-voltaic (PV) system on the roof along with a battery storage option. A grant from South Cambridgeshire District Council had been received and the Parish Council secured a grant of £9,500 from the National Lottery Community fund. The Village Hall provided a loan to the Parish Council to pay for the balance of costs for the PV System whilst an Appeal Fund was launched to cover the shortfall.

### **Trustees Meetings**

The Village Hall Management Committee have met 5 times including the AGM in October 2023.

### **Committee**

The Committee comprises of 10 trustees and was reformed in February 2024 when 2 new members joined and the responsibilities of the trustees changed with a new Chair and a new Treasurer appointed.

### **Safety**

All surveys, certificates and inspections are up to date.

### **Financial**

The hall holds 2 accounts with Lloyds, a current account and a deposit account. The £4000 grant received from South Cambridgeshire District Council for the PV installation was transferred to the Parish Council who took on the management of the PV installation.

At the end of the 2023-24 financial year each bank account stood at £10,000.

These accounts are accessed on-line by the Chairman and the Treasurer.

The Financial Statement for the year ending 31 March 2023 is attached and was submitted with the Annual Return to the Charity Commission.

### **Income**

Income has been maintained at a satisfactory level with regular clubs such as Karate and Iaido continuing as before.

### **Charity Commission**

The Charity Commission has been advised of the change to the Charity's Governing Document which had been agreed at the October 2023 AGM.

They have also been advised of the changes to the list of trustees following the February 2024 Management Committee meeting.

### **Cleaning**

The standard of cleaning by the contractor continues to be acceptable.

### **Maintenance**

Following competitive quotes, the contract for Broadband in the hall was changed from BT to ZEN on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024, and the Electricity supply was changed from EonNext to Scottish Power on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 the later contract is for a period of 1 year.

### **PV Installation.**

The PV and Battery installation was installed on 21st September 2023.

The project was undertaken by the parish Council at a net cost of £20,071.12.

### **Trevor Hall - Chair of Management Committee to 24 February 2024**

### **West Wickham & District Gardening Club report for the Parish Council 2024.**

I am pleased to report that the West Wickham & District Gardening Club has had a successful year, with a full programme of events including summer outings, evening talks, and of course the Plant Sale and the Annual Show.

During the summer of 2023 members enjoyed two visits; the first in June to Fuller's Mill, which is always a favourite, followed by a lovely evening in July at Denny Swete's Garden, at Tinker's Green Farm, with beautiful herbaceous borders and an inspiring potager.

In August, the club, along with members of three other local gardening clubs, hosted an all-day free event which focused on Climate Change and Gardening. The hall was filled to the maximum for the talks in the morning and many people enjoyed the range of stands and stalls in the afternoon, which included plant nurseries, an Eden Project Communities stand, a book stall, and many others focusing on what can be done to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

The Annual Show took place on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September. This year was a great success with many entries in all categories. There was a lovely display of vegetables, flowers, cakes and other domestic produce along with the photos submitted for the photography class. It was a most enjoyable afternoon providing everyone who attended a chance to chat, enjoy the refreshments, and take part in the raffle and the auction of produce.

Our AGM, in September saw some changes to the committee. Sadly, Sue Thurston stood down from the committee, and as the Annual Show Co-ordinator. Also, Linda Upton stood down from the Annual Show Committee. I would like to thank Sue for her amazing hard work over the last few years in both roles, and Linda for all her help with the Annual Show. We welcomed two new members, Sally Moon, and Ronnie Temple.

Andrew Morris, as Treasurer reported we have healthy reserves and this year we currently have 38 members. However, a change was agreed to the cost of membership, which is now £8.00 per annum, with no concessions for couples.

I would like to thank all the committee for all the hard work they have put into the running of the club. This includes thanks to Andrew Morris in his role as treasurer and membership secretary, Sue Herbert as minutes secretary, Indi Liepa for all her work in providing us with such a great programme for the year, Marian Corbett in organising the seed-order, Lorraine Temple who has so efficiently overseen the catering arrangements, and Janet Morris for editing the newsletter. I would like also to thank Sally and Ronnie, who despite only having just joined the committee, have already put a lot of work into promoting the club and bringing in new ideas.

We have had a rich and varied programme of speakers over the last few months, from Huw Richards speaking in October about his passion for Orchids, to Hamish Symington in November relating his research work on Pollination.

This year our Christmas social meeting included the option of making a range of tree and table decorations. This was good fun and much enjoyed by all. Several people took home their creations, which included special Swedish tree decorations as demonstrated to us by Indi.

The 2024 meetings continued to be very popular, with Lucy Skellorn of Foster Irises talking about 'My family and other irises', Ian Bedford providing us with his take on 'Companion planting', Gwenda Kyd with her interesting talk entitled '12 tremendous trees', and finally Helen Chen of Japonica Plants Nursery, telling us about her Asian Woodland Plants.

After another successful Plant Sale on 18<sup>th</sup> May, we are now looking forward to the Big Garden Party which is being held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June at West Wickham Village Hall. Sally M, Ronnie T and Janet M have been working towards our club having a stand there, where we aim to promote the club and hopefully attract some more members, especially from the younger generations. We also have a stand at the Castle Camps Fete on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July, for the same purpose. Our aim is to enrich the gardening club experience, not only from a horticultural perspective but from the all-important role that it has as a social hub in the village and surrounding district.

*Sue Boase Chair, West Wickham & District Gardening Club  
May 2024*

## **WEST WICKHAM CARPET BOWLS CLUB**

The Club is struggling for survival. We are down to 10 members which means we are running at a loss each week and having to use up our reserves. We often have trouble having enough members available who are able to lift the mats in and out of the store cupboard and we have had to cancel some meetings because of this but we are very keen to keep going with greater support. Carpet bowls is a fun, interesting and skilful sport. It enables members to keep active and enjoy a sociable evening at the same time, so we don't understand why more people don't come along and join us.

Carpet bowls was developed specifically to be played in smaller spaces like village halls so the game varies slightly from indoor or short mat bowls. It is accessible to all – male, female, all ages and the less able-bodied and all equipment is provided which makes it a very inexpensive sport.

We would very much welcome support from members of the Parish Council in promoting the Club and who might even like to take a lead and come along and have a go themselves!

Janet Morris, Secretary

### **WEST WICKHAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY CLUB**

The Club has welcomed several new members this year which is very encouraging. We have also been able to run a full programme with outside speakers for the first time since the pandemic. As well as a talks programme, we hold considerable resources for discovering more about the history of the village, its buildings and its inhabitants. We have a large collection of photographs and we continue to help and advise anyone researching their family or house history. Affiliation to both the Cambridge Antiquarian Society and the Cambridgeshire Association for Local History gives access to wider networks and sources of information.

It would be good to see more than one Parish Councillor join us as learning about the village in the past and the wider area can only enhance understanding and inform decision making.

Janet Morris, Secretary

### **WEST WICKHAM ALLOTMENTS.**

We have had a mixed year on the allotments. We have been rained out and eaten alive by slugs.

All allotments are occupied, with 2 new allotment holders joining the ranks. Most of the allotments are now spring ready with one trying a no dig method. It's nice to be able to share different ideas and plants amongst the plots.

A big thank you to the allotment holders who helped install the new gate and lock this year.

Currently there is no waiting list for an allotment.

Cllr Caroline Mulley-Richards

### **ART CLUB**

The Art Club is for local residents to be creative for 2 hours every 1st and 3rd Monday of the month, 6-8pm, or 5-7pm. The cost is £3 per session, which is paid on the day via card or cash.

Attendees are of mixed age and ability. They can bring their own projects, or be inspired by simply watching others do their arts and crafts. Refreshments are included.

Ashley May

## **District and County Councillor's Annual Report 2024**

### **County Council**

A1307 After some 10 years since the finances were secured for the projects, the upgrades to the A1307 completed in 2024. Over the last 12 months we saw completion of the roundabout on the A1307 at Linton, as well as the remodelling of the Dean Road junction between Linton and Horseheath.

There was some good (we hope) progress made on the final leg of the 'Greenway', which is the off-road path that caters for all non-motorised users, and links Linton to Abington and beyond. The original plan was to direct the route along Linton Road, Abington through the middle of the village and then out along Bourne Bridge Road. This option was rejected after public consultation and the new route was decided to be along Pampisford Road. The downside of this is that it will take longer to construct, as there are compulsory land purchases required, which involve lawyers, and always take time. However, the section along Newmarket Road, Abington is less contentious, and work is planned to begin this summer.

Full detail can be seen at - <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/public-transport-schemes/cambridge-south-east-transport>

### **Greater Cambridge Partnership**

The big news that came from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) this year, and last, was that Cambridgeshire were offered a large sum of money (many many millions) by central government to help improve the local public transport network in and around the city. The reason for this wasn't random - Cambridge scores very poorly on congestion and pollution metrics – some saying it is the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst city for congestion in England and that it emits over 25% more pollution than the national average.

A solution to this, that the government were looking to support financially, was get a very reliable and cost-effective public transport system, as has been seen to work in other cities. This would eventually have had to be self-funded and the proposed way to achieve this would be to charge for road usage, a congestion charge, or what was being labelled as a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ).

After having undertaken the largest public consultation in Cambridgeshire's history on the subject and as a result not having enough political support to move the scheme forward, the proposals fell and are highly unlikely to be revived.

### **Civil Parking Enforcement**

After applying to government several years ago to take on the responsibility of parking enforcement in South Cambridgeshire from the Police, this year it was finally implemented. As of February 2024 there are now dedicated traffic wardens patrolling the villages and towns of South Cambs issuing parking tickets for poor and illegal parking. As the scheme is still in its infancy there aren't huge numbers of officers, so the impact is unlikely to be immediate, or completely solve the issue, but they are aware of the 'hot spots' for bad parking and will be prioritising these areas. Anyone can report areas of bad parking on the County Councils website - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/parking-services/south-cambridgeshire-civil-parking-enforcement>

### **Solar Farm**

In the summer last year, the County and District Councils were approached by a solar farm company who had plans to build a solar farm on some of the land between West Wrating, Balsham and the A11. The size of the proposal is fairly significant, 900 hectares, and if approved today would make it the largest solar farm in the UK.

The scheme has been altered somewhat since the first iteration of the plans and at a public presentation by the applicants in Balsham, the areas being considered had changed. Essentially the area will be from the edge of West Wrating to the A11, where the current solar farm is.

The reason that we get a lot of green energy schemes proposed for this area (the wind farm, existing solar farm etc) is because the main power line runs parallel to the A11 here – meaning that energy can be fed directly into the main power grid without having to pipe it miles away.

The obstacles that the other scheme have come across in this area is the impact on the countryside and the loss of high-grade agricultural land. A formal planning application is yet to come but when it does, given the scale of it, it will be decided by the Secretary of State rather than the local planning authorities.

### Anaerobic Digesters

Over the last year we have had two planning applications in our area for anaerobic digestion plants in our area. One is in Streetly End, West Wickham and the other just over the Suffolk border outside of Haverhill on the A1307.

The proposals are slightly different in scale with the Suffolk application being larger but the principle of location of these plants seems to be the main cause for concern from those living near to the sites. These plants tend to be in the open countryside, rather than close to villages and towns and the residents have written into the relevant local planning authorities to make these points.

At time of writing neither has been decided, so please do write to the planning officers directly if you would like to comment on either:

Acorn, Haverhill – [Andrew.rutter@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.rutter@suffolk.gov.uk)

Streetly End, West Wickham – [helen.wass@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.wass@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

### **District Council**

#### Cambridge 2050

For those of you who read our monthly reports, you will be aware that there is currently a proposal from central government to attract international science and tech companies to the Cambridge area making it the UK's version of 'Silicon Valley or Boston' (their words not ours). To facilitate this there would need to be housing for these companies to utilise and the currently proposal is to build 150,000 houses in and around Cambridge to make the area as attractive as possible to these companies and to do this by the year 2050.

To put this into perspective, Cambridge city is currently 56,000 houses, meaning that if these plans went ahead it would quadruple the size of the city and could make villages like Abington suburbs of the city.

There will be, of course, major issues to overcome such as water scarcity, electricity scarcity, existing infrastructure and local planning issues such as impact on the Green Belt. The plans are some way off being finalised but the local councils that will be

directly affected, South Cambs District Council, Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council are currently battling to ‘stay at the table’ and maintain a voice in how these proposals are formulated.

### Four Day Week

As of January 2023, the District Council have been trialling a 4-day working week for their office-based staff. The reason for this was because our area is an expensive one to live in, and local authority wages being set nationally, it was very hard to attract and hold onto staff, specifically specialist roles such as planners. The trial is an attempt to see if this makes the role more attractive and ultimately employ people on permanent contracts rather than using expensive agency staff. There are also health and wellbeing benefits for the staff as well as the fact that this is quite a pioneering pilot scheme, as the council are the first public sector body to try this.

Before starting the trial there was extensive performance benchmarking undertaken to ensure the council had something to compare the results to, as an indication of the trials success or not. The results are all independently assessed by the Bennett Institute of Cambridge University.

The waste collection service moved to a four-day week in September and the transition went extremely smoothly, a lot smoother than expected.

The government has taken a position of being against the concept of a four day week and has requested that SCDC send performance data to them every week, which is also made public on their website - <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week> - a decision on whether to make the trial permanent, or not, will be made later in the year.

### Elections

In May 2024 there will have been an election for the Police & Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire. Also in 2024 there will be a General Election – at time of writing the date of this is unknown but likely to be in the autumn.

In May 2025 there will be elections for the County Council and the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

In May 2026 there will be District Council elections.

### Contact Details

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