

WEST WICKHAM PARISH MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19th May 2025

at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

Those attending were the Parish Council, District Cllr. Harvey, 10 parishioners and the Parish Clerk.

1. **Minutes** of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on 29th May, 2024 were read and signed as correct.
2. **Matters arising:** None.
3. **Chairman's Report:** Chairman, Cllr Alex Schuilenburg's report is attached.
4. **Correspondence related to the last Parish Meeting:** None.

5. Reports on Village Hall, Societies, Groups and Associations. Reports were received from the Gardening Club, the Bowls Club, the Historical Group and District & County Cllrs. These reports will be published on the website, Village Voice and displayed on the Noticeboards. Thank you for taking the time to write these reports. The Chairman read out all the reports. He also gave a short report on the Village Hall, pointing out the installation of solar panels last year and that £1300 had been received for electricity sent to grid. The rental takings for the year are down slightly, with the Karate Club cutting back on the times they hire the hall. A suggestion has been made to start a Youth Club on Saturday mornings or Friday evenings. This would require the help of volunteers. The hall is in excellent condition and he thanked Trevor Hall for the very good job he had done whilst Chairman of the VHMC. Thanks were given to all those who had sent in their reports.

6. Finances: The Chairman apologised for the smallness of print of the accounts spreadsheet available to view but said they will be going on the website in a larger font. He went through the accounts for the past year and costs have certainly increased. Money has been put aside to replace part of the play area fencing but the monies at the end of the year £32,497.00 going into 2025/2026 financial year.

7. Any Other Business: There was a complaint about the orchid area and another wild-flower area which had been mown. The Chairman had received apologies from Rob Giles.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Chair's Report to the West Wickham Annual Parish Meeting 2025

Good evening everyone and welcome to our Annual Parish Meeting. The aim of this meeting is to provide you with an update on what we, your Parish Council, have been doing over the past year, as well as updates on what is happening within our community. It also gives you the opportunity to ask questions or raise issues regarding services or items provided within our remit.

It has again been an honour to preside for another year as chair of the parish council, 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, support and effort in providing information, advice and support to us throughout the year, and thank our Parish Clerk, Jenny Richards, for her continued experience and professionalism. I would also like to thank those members of our community who have supported our meetings during the year, and have supported our activities. Thank you all.

We had six meetings in the village hall over the 2024/2025 year in the Village Hall, typically on the last Monday of every second month, during which we discussed a wide range of topics. We encourage and welcome all members of our community into these meetings, to take an active interest in what we do and to positively contribute towards our activities.

During these meetings we discussed large planning applications, such as the Streetly Hall Anaerobic Digester, as well as smaller developments within our Parish, as well as other developments outside our Parish that would affect our community such as the Horseheath Lodge Development and Acorn AD Plant proposal in Haverhill. While we objected to the Streetly Hall AD proposal, this was later approved by the County Council.

We were frustrated by the apparent unwillingness of South Cambs Highways to repair the potholes, flooding and signage in our roads during the year, despite reporting the same potholes on multiple occasions over several months with numerous vehicles suffering a variety of damage due to potholes and claims against the Council for these being turned down. We were similarly frustrated by the failure of the District Council to adequately clear the debris left behind from an abandoned burnt-out vehicle after the body was removed, as well as regularly empty *all* the public waste bins.

However, The Big Garden Party was again a success and well attended, such that we have decided to make this an annual event and invited clubs, societies and the church to make presentations or run stalls to promote their various organisations and raise funding. We also replaced the fencing at the lower end of the playground, and provided the necessary maintenance and repairs to the remainder of the playground and around the Village Hall. We removed one of the old goal posts, initially for repair, from the playing field and are now looking to provide a smaller 5-a-side football field on the field.

The Devana rewilding project is providing a lovely area to walk. Work on the new habitats has commenced with ponds created, mixed scrub and grassland planted, as well as trees, archards and hedgerows. Different species of deer can be found roaming the area which has also become a regular visiting area and home to the many raptors in our region, and is also frequented by foxes, badgers and even otters. The footpaths through our region are also mainly well looked after by the majority of land-owners, though bridge repairs and maintenance have been slow or not-at-all.

Speeding is unfortunately still an issue through West Wickham and Streetly End, the latter of which suffers from the worst offenders. While our funding for a replacement MVAS unit has been approved to help us re-establish a Speedwatch in our community, unfortunately this has seen numerous delays and we still lack the basic equipment needed to re-establish our SpeedWatch and to reliably extract data from our outdated equipment.

Unfortunately with the continued rising rate of inflation, we had a deficit of over £1,300 in the accounts although this can be attributed mostly to the playground and fencing repairs that were held over from the previous year. However, we have asked for a 5% increase to bring it to £13,650 p.a. to allow us to meet the parish's ongoing commitments.

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. These are the main source of local news, events and resources for the village, with the WhatsApp West Wickham Community providing more immediate news and information. I would also like to thank the Village Hall Management Committee who maintain and run the Village Hall. Our Village Hall is a valuable and important community asset that remains popular and well used.

Finally, I would like to thank again the volunteers within the community that contribute their time, effort and money to provide events such as the coffee mornings, the Hubs and Hub nights. Volunteers like you genuinely change the word and make West Wickham a lovely community in which to live, and we are extremely grateful. We always greatly appreciate any volunteers who can spare some time to assist with our clubs, events and the like - without you these could not exist.

Alex Schuilenburg, Chair of the Parish Council.

2025 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – REPORTS

West Wickham & District Local History Club

Report to Annual Parish Meeting May 2025

The Club has about twenty members, the majority from West Wickham but with others from Horseheath and Balsham. We have had a full programme of evening talks during the year. Subjects have included wartime RAF Wratting Common, the last boy chimney sweep who died in Fulbourn, researching family history, the results of archaeological excavations over a number of years at Linton Village College and the rise and fall of 19thc Cambridgeshire horticultural societies – the latter being a joint meeting with West Wickham & District Gardening Club. We restart our next programme in October and already have talks lined up on Balsham and the medieval Sturbridge Fair.

Monthly articles in the *Village Voice* are intended to inform and encourage interest in our local history and we would certainly like to see more people at our meetings – as is commonly said ‘you can’t understand the present and the future unless you know where we’ve come from’. An understanding of local history also provides the ideal background for parish councillors and others involved in local government, so we would particularly welcome more of them to join us.

Further information and details can be had from Janet Morris, 21 High Street

Tel: 290863 Email: jmmorris@jmmorris.plus.com

West Wickham Carpet Bowls Club

Report to Annual Parish Meeting May 2025

The Carpet Bowls Club was started in the new Village Hall in 2000 – indeed the promise of its foundation was used as part of the grant applications to fund the building of the Hall. Over the years it has been very successful with up to 30 members playing each week. From the start, the ethos of the Club has been one of friendliness and inclusiveness with a determination not to become too serious about competition. However, although we have had many new members join us, a combination of ill health, death and moving away has meant gains have not exceeded losses and we are down to just 10 members. We all love playing – carpet bowls provides gentle sporting activity at very low cost along with being a great social evening meeting with old friends and making new but we are finding it increasingly difficult to physically get the mats in and out of the store room. We have only four members (at a pinch five) who are fit enough to do this with perhaps only three able to roll the carpet up at the end of the evening. If any of these are not able to make an evening, we have to cancel. We are very grateful for the support of the Village Hall Committee but it’s not simply about finance – we want to keep playing and would like to welcome some new members to make it even more fun. Anyone can play carpet bowls so it is a great opportunity to get all generations together – the measure of a thriving community. It would be lovely, for a start, if all Parish Councillors would come along and have a go. Even if you

think it's not for you, you are in a position to knowledgeably enthuse others and encourage them to support a worthwhile community activity.

We meet on a Wednesday evening, 7pm-9.30pm, and further details can be had from:
Janet Morris, 21 High Street

Tel: 290863 Email: jmmorris@jmmorris.plus.com

West Wickham & District Gardening Club report for the Parish Council 19.5.25

I am happy to report that the West Wickham & District Gardening Club has had another successful and very busy year, with a range of interesting and stimulating talks and events. I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work behind the scenes that has supported this success. A good deal of work has been done to promote the club not only within West Wickham, but in the surrounding villages. We now have 67 members, which is many more than we have had over recent years. However, we do recognise that some of this number may have something to do with the recent closing down of two other local gardening clubs.

Looking back over the year, the Plant Sale on 18th May 2024 was very popular, despite the terribly cold and wet spring, when germination and growth of so many seedlings were slow. How different it is now as we look forward to this year's Sale having had periods of lovely warm, sunny weather, though this time with very little rain.

Last year, despite strong winds, a trusty team ran a successful stand at the Big Garden Party on Saturday 1st June whose aim was to raise the profile of the club and to attract new members. Also, as a result of this cold, wet weather, the first of the summer visits in June to Grove Lodge in Saffron Walden had to be cancelled. Despite torrential rain at one point, the July visit to Porter's Lodge was very successful, with 23 members and friends attending, sheltering at first in the teashop, being eventually rewarded with a most interesting tour around the gardens.

We also had a stand at the Castle Camps Fete on Saturday 6th July, again strongly influenced by the terrible weather. We had to abandon the outside gazebo early on and take shelter in the Village Hall, where we had some very good conversations with the visitors.

The Garden Fair on August 31st replaced the Annual Show this year as a trial, following on from feedback about the future of the show at the last AGM. Overall, it was felt that this new approach to the summer gathering was well received, and we are planning on repeating this approach again this year.

Our AGM in September 2024, was followed by a well-attended social event, held to thank Andrew Morris for all his work on the Committee over the years, and specifically as Treasurer during recent times.

Moving into the Autumn/Winter programme, we have enjoyed a good range of talks and a Christmas Quiz for the December meeting. Amongst other topics we have learned a good deal about climbing roses, forgotten bees and how to set up and maintain a terrarium. The gardening club also had a beautifully adorned table at the West Wickham Christmas Fair on December 7th, demonstrating what can be created in the way of sustainable decorations using plant materials.

Alongside all this activity, work has been going on over the year on renovating the borders surrounding the Village Hall, and although this has been a West Wickham Village project, many of the gardening club members have put a great deal of energy and work into this, with excellent results for all to see.

Finally, we are looking forward to some enjoyable visits to local NGS gardens over the summer, while anticipating the beginning of another year full of activities and events.

A big thank you to all the members and the committee for taking part, and making the West Wickham & District Gardening Club such a busy and enjoyable club.

Sue Boase, Chair May 2025

District and County Councillor's Annual Report 2025

County Council

Kingsway Solar Farm

This year our area has been approached by a solar developer with plans for a very large solar farm in the fields between Balsham, West Wrating and Weston Colville. If the plans are granted planning permission it would be the largest solar farm in the country – some 1500 hectares – and would be larger than Heathrow Airport, Newmarket or the built up parts of Cambridge. The process is that the applicant has engaged in an ‘informal consultation’ at the back end of 2024 and is due to launch a ‘formal consultation’ in the summer of 2025. We would encourage everyone to engage with this, regardless of proximity to the site, as it will be one of the largest developments in our area and will affect us all in some way. Due to the scale of the proposal, the final decision will be made by a government planning inspector rather than by any of the local councils.

Full plans can be seen on the Kingsway Solar website - <https://kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk/>

Civil Parking Enforcement

The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (traffic wardens) in South Cambridgeshire was over a year ago. There are stats to show that there have been a number of tickets issued in that time, however, the problem of bad/illegal parking persists. The scheme is funded until 2029, after which it needs to be self-funding else it could cease. There is a link on the County Council's website where regular poor parking can be reported and considered for patrol by the traffic wardens - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/parking-services/south-cambridgeshire-civil-parking-enforcement>

Anaerobic Digesters

Over the past few years, we have had planning applications submitted for two separate anaerobic biodigester plants in our area. One was in Streetly End and the other just over the Suffolk border outside of Haverhill.

Mid-way through 2024 planning permission was granted for the plant in Streetly End, so construction of this can now commence, if the applicant still wants to proceed with it. At time of writing the plant in Suffolk hasn't had a decision made on it but one is due in June 2025.

There are currently official objections from the Highways department and the Environment Agency, so we would be surprised if this one is granted planning approval.

Local Government Reform

This year, the government announced that it has plans to reduce the number of local councils in the country and merge them into what are called unitary authorities – this would mean one local council that delivered all of the services that the District and County Councils currently undertake.

The government has asked local councils to put forward proposals for what they saw as sustainable geographic areas for these new unitary councils to operate in. Where we are in South Cambridgeshire the starting point for us is a joint council that covers the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire areas. This is because a lot of the services, such as waste collection, planning and legal, are currently shared already. There could be a case to extend the area to include either Huntingdonshire or East Cambridgeshire areas but the starting point for negotiations will be the Cambridge City/South Cambridgeshire combination.

We appreciate that the majority of people won't care what form their local council takes, as long as the services provided continue in as an efficient manner as possible. However, a change of this magnitude represents a significant upheaval, in local government terms, so watch this space.

Local Elections

On May 1st this year there were local elections for the County Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (the Mayor).

Henry was absolutely delighted to have been re-elected to represent the Linton division on the County Council – thank you to everyone from all 13 villages in the Division for putting your trust in him again. Regardless of who you voted for, he will continue to do his best for our part of the world.

The Liberal Democrats now have control of the County Council as they won *just* over half of seats. The overall composition of the County Council, by number of seats, now looks like this:

Liberal Democrat – 31

Conservative – 10

Reform – 10

Labour – 5

Green – 3

Independent – 2

The Conservative candidate, Paul Bristow, won the Mayoral election.

District Council

Cambridge 2025 The current government is continuing to promote massive development in and around Cambridge City and South Cambs. The prospect of something like 150,000 new houses in the area over time will mean significant changes. But before any of this becomes reality there are many hurdles to overcome, not least the issues with water and electricity

shortages as well as transport infrastructure issues. These are problems the new Unitary Authority will have to tackle when it comes into being.

Four Day Week

After more than two years of trials, extensive analysis of performance and delaying issues with the previous government we are, at last, about to decide on whether or not to make the four-day week permanent. The decision will be made at the July Full Council meeting considering the results of all the independently assessed performance data, including financial implications and the results of the public consultation.

All indications are that the trial has been a success.

Food Waste Collection

It is planned to introduce a separate food waste collection next year. This is Government policy and we are obliged to introduce the new scheme. It will mean having a caddy for food only, it will no longer be possible to add food waste to the green bin. This is a major operation for the District Council requiring an additional 22 vehicles and around 75 new staff. Much of the initial costs are met by Government grants, but not all. There will be an extra cost that will need to be met out of the council's resources.

Contact Details

District Council – Geoff Harvey – geoff.harvey@gmail.com

County Council – Henry Batchelor – henrybatchelor89@gmail.com