

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIR: Cllr IVOR FRENCH

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of Wickham Market Parish Council held on
Monday 18 May 2026 at 19:00



FC26-1 Election of Chair

It was proposed that Councillor I French be elected as Chair. **All Agreed.** Councillor French signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

FC26-2 Election of Vice Chair and signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office

It was proposed that Councillor Chenery be elected as Vice Chair. **All Agreed.** Councillor Chenery signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

FC26-3 Present from Wickham Market Parish Council (WMPC).

Councillors I French, Chenery, Creasey, Day, S French, Horsnell, Jenkinson, Dempsey-Gray (19:15) with A Besly (Clerk)

FC26-4 Present from the Public.

Three, although one left shortly after the start of the meeting.

FC26-5 Open Public Forum session.

One member of the public made a number of comments very quickly. These comments have been reported as accurately as possible with post meeting responses from the Council in *blue italic*.

- Can the June meeting have an agenda point for the Climate Action Strategy. *Yes, working group and operational reports are requested for alternate meetings starting in June with finance reporting at alternate meetings starting in May.*
- Concern over the governance of the village hall committee and the management of the modernisation programme. *A progress report was published for the Full Council meeting on 20 April. The Committee was designed to make decisions based on briefings from the working group. The last decision required for the project was to engage professionals to provide a design suitable for the tender process. This was approved by the Full Council on 16 March. Prior to this, no decisions could be made pending the approval of the Sizewell C funding. The future need for a committee will be discussed at item FC26:17.*
- A request to see the village hall briefings, quotes and payments. *All payments are reported to bi-monthly full council meetings. All payments over £500 are reported in WMPC annual accounting statements. Three quotes were obtained for each of the primary design contractors for the project.*
- Claims the precept has increased 50% over the last two years. *While this headline statement is true, it is completely misleading. A precept analysis is attached at Annex 1 which shows:
Up to March 2026 the cumulative precept increase since 2020 was 22% against cumulative inflation of 29%.
Over the last 7 year period the charge for a band D property has risen by a total of £3.20 per month for the whole period.
The new homes at Wickham Gate have contributed to the amount of precept now received.*
- Concern over staff salaries overspend against budget. *In 2025-26 salaries exceeded budget by £3,174 or 5.2%. This was driven by additional staff and additional hours that were not budgeted but were approved by the full council.*
- Concern that the Council is spending money inappropriately on footpath maintenance. *Suffolk County Council who are responsible for footpaths, will only maintain them once or perhaps twice per year. In the past WMPC have had numerous complaints regarding overgrowth on the two primary routes to school – Little Lane and FP9 from George Lane to King Edwards Avenue. To support families with young children and less mobile residents, WMPC agreed to pay contractors to manage the overgrowth of brambles and nettles. As landowner of the Glebe allotments (via a long term lease), WMPC are also obliged to ensure that the northern hedge does not impede the footpath.*
- It was also noted that the Village Hall Modernisation Working Group has no Terms of Reference. *This will be resolved before the next Full Council meeting.*

A second member of the public raised the following issues:

- Grass cutting along verges and footpaths is too vigorous and the car park at Simons Cross banks have been cut to the ground. Can we please leave such area to July before cutting to allow the seeds to set.
 - The Council should be contacting land owners to get footpaths cut and not doing this themselves.
- FC26-6** Proposal to authorise Apologies for Absence from Councillor Cooke. **All Agreed.** Apologies were also noted from Councillor Noble (ESC)
- FC26-7** Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda. None
- FC26-8** Proposal to approve the draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on 20 April 2026. **All Agreed.**
- FC26-9** Receive Minutes from Committees and Working Groups.
1. Planning Committee 11 May. Councillor Jenkinson provided a precis of the meeting.
 2. Climate Change Working Group. Minutes have not yet been published but Councillor Chenery provided a precis of the meeting.
- FC26-10** Suffolk County Councillor's Report. (SCC). The Clerk does not yet have Mr Molyneux's contact details.
- FC26-11** East Suffolk Councillor's Report. (ESC). There were no questions.
- FC26-12** Outgoing Chair's Report. There were no questions.
- FC26-13** Clerk's Report. There were no questions.
1. Would WMPC in principle support the resurrection of the Carnival?
After some discussion it was agreed that the Council support in principle the concept of reinstating the carnival. Members would like to know what level of active support is expected as the Council is 30% down on resource.
- FC26-14** Deputy Clerk's Report. The Deputy Clerk has been on leave so there is nothing significant to report.
- FC26-15** Finance Reporting for May 2026. The reports were reviewed and there were no questions.
1. Review Finance Report and Payments Schedule.
 2. Review Bank Reconciliation.
 3. Review Summary Financial Statement.
- FC26-16** Proposal to approve Committee and Working Group Terms of Reference [ToR], Members and Committee Chairs. *Published at: <https://wickhammarket-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/parish-council-documentation/>*
1. Finance & General Purpose (F&GP) Committee. *No change proposed.*
 2. Planning Committee. *No change proposed.*
 3. Sizewell C Committee. *No change proposed.*
 4. Climate Change Working Group. *No change proposed.*
 5. Emergency Plan Working Group. *No change proposed.*
 6. Staffing & Personnel Committee. *No change proposed.*
 7. Village Hall Modernisation Committee. *No change proposed.*
- Items 1-7 were reviewed and approved. It was noted that the Parish Council can still amend Terms of Reference at any full Council meeting. It was also noted that the Village Hall Modernisation Working Group ToR was missing. The Clerk will resolve this.
8. Schedule of Committees, Working Groups and Representatives. *Published*
The following changes were proposed and agreed:
 - Village Hall Modernisation Committee: Add Simon Harrington
 - Emergency Plan Working Group: Add Councillor I French
 - Climate Change Working Group: Remove Niki Fowler, Add Anne Westover and councillor Creasey.
 - Village Hall Modernisation Working Group, appoint the following members:
 - Councillors I French, S French, Creasey, Chenery, Horsnell with Steve Flavell, Stuart Gunn and Clive Edmonds. A chair was not appointed.
 - Under representatives add Parish News Magazine, Deputy Clerk Leanne Castle.
- FC26-17** Proposal to consider options for the future of the Village Hall Modernisation Committee. Following Councillor Horsnell stepping down from the position of Chair of this committee, there was considerable discussion regarding the way forward. As there were no volunteers for the role it was suggested that the committee be disbanded. The working group would manage the day to day work and provide briefings to the full council for all decisions. This will be discussed with working group and committee members to agree a way forward and propose a new Chair for the Working Group.
- FC26-18** Proposal to agree bank signatories with electronic banking access.

Five signatories were confirmed: Councillors Chenery, Cooke, Creasey, Dempsey-Gray and I French. Three have electronic access: Councillors Chenery, Cooke and I French.

FC26-19 Proposal to agree a scheme of delegation. Financial Regulations 6.8 refers. All five items were approved. **All Agreed.**

1. Finance & General Purpose Committee. *No Change Proposed from current ToR*
2. Sizewell C Committee. *No Change Proposed from current ToR*
3. Planning Committee. *No Change Proposed from current ToR*
4. Village Hall Modernisation Committee. *No Change Proposed from current ToR*
5. Clerk. *Updated document Published*

FC26-20 Review of inventory of land and other assets. The Asset Register was reviewed and approved.

FC26-21 Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insurable risks. No change proposed.

There was significant discussion regarding third party insurance for the Skate Park which Ansva do not offer and other insurers are reluctant. It was agreed to erect disclaimer notices.

FC26-22 Proposal to accept insurance renewal from Ansva of £2,019.47 and make payment. **All Agreed.**

FC26-23 Review Subscriptions to other bodies for the Council and staff: *Published*. Reviewed and agreed.

FC26-24 Review of grants made under General Power of Competence. *Published*. Reviewed and agreed.

FC26-25 Proposal to Review and adopt the following: *Published at: <https://wickhammarket-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/parish-council-documentation/>*

1. Standing Orders *No change proposed. All Agreed.*
2. Financial Regulations. *No change proposed. All Agreed.*

FC26-26 Proposal to approve the Risk Assessment: *no change proposed. All Agreed.*

FC26-27 Governance: Proposal to readopt Governance documents for 2026-27. There are no changes proposed. All documents can be found for review before the meeting at <https://wickhammarket-pc.gov.uk/parish-council/parish-council-documentation/>

All of these documents have previously been reviewed and agreed and there has been no change of legislation or circumstances that would affect them. It was therefore proposed that all documents in items 1 to 29 be approved. **All Agreed.**

Operating Policies

1. Code of Conduct
2. Complaints Procedure
3. Vexatious Complaints Policy
4. Public Participation at Council Meetings
5. Health and Safety Policy
6. Grant Awarding Policy

Information Policies

7. Freedom of Information Policy
8. Freedom of Information Publication Scheme
9. Information Commissioners Office (ICO) Publication Scheme
10. Data Protection and Information Management Policy
11. Information Technology Policy
12. Press and Media Policy
13. CCTV Policy
14. Privacy Notice

People Policies

15. Travel and Expenses Policy
16. Equality, Diversity and inclusion Policy
17. Working From Home
18. Risk Management Strategy
19. Training and Development Policy
20. Safeguarding Policy
21. Safeguarding Procedures
22. Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

Volunteer Policies, processes and risk assessments

23. Working With Volunteers Policy
24. Volunteer Agreement:
25. Volunteer Toolbox talk and attendance record:

Risk Assessments:

- 26. Tree Planting
- 27. Coppicing
- 28. Conservation Working Party
- 29. Litter Picking

FC26-28 Proposal to agree schedule of meetings for ordinary council and standing committees.
Published.

It was noted that this schedule contains Village Hall Modernisation Committee meeting dates. These can be removed should the committee be disbanded. The proposal was therefore approved. **All Agreed.**

FC26-29 Proposal to Join Suffolk Road Safety Group *(em 28/4 Jeremy Muller refers)*

This proposal was discussed and it was difficult to see how it would benefit Wickham Market. It was proposed that this item is reviewed again once the new Suffolk County Council strategy is understood.

FC26-30 Reporting items for the next meeting.

It was noted that the Clerk has already suggested items for the June agenda in the Clerk's report. In addition to these items the following was requested:

- Review of barriers to deter car parking on the grass at the village hall
- Update on Changing Places
- Outcome of the next Sizewell C committee meeting.

FC26-31 Date of next meeting: **Monday 15 June 2026**

Meeting Closed at 21:01

Signed.

Cllr Ivor French, Chair.

Date.

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Annex 1

Analysis of Precept requests since 2020-21

Precept analysis											
Options											
	Keep Precept <u>value</u> the same			Keep Precept <u>Charge</u> the same			Actual Requested				
Year	Band D	% change	Precept	Band D	Precept	Precept	Band D	% Increase	Cum % from 2020-21	Bank of England Inflation Calculator	Cum % from 2020
2020-21						73,000	89.23				
2021-22	91.08	2.07%	73,000	89.23	71,520	71,983	89.23	0%		2.60%	
2022-23	87.22	-2.25%	71,983	89.23	73,645	75,118	91.01	2%		9.10%	
2023-24	90.06	-0.45%	75,118	91.01	75,456	75,456	91.01	0%		8.60%	
2024-25	89.52	-1.64%	75,456	91.01	76,714	79,015	93.74	3%		1.30%	
2025-26	86.88	-7.32%	79,015	93.74	85,251	99,000	108.86	16%	22%	5.20%	29.40%
2026-27	105.34	-3.23%	99,000	108.86	102,311	120,000	127.68	17%	43%		
Actual increase per month for a Band D property over the last 7 years							3.20				
Local Comparisons for 2026-27											
	Total Charge	Band D Charge									
	£k	£									
Aldeburgh	302	120.83									
Beccles	327	92.99									
Bungay	283	161.12									
Framlingham	332	195.55									
Halesworth	306	155.48									
Kessingland	189	124.85									
Leiston	394	186.10									
Martlesham	250	107.92									
Melton	143	71.99									
Rendlesham	196	192.23									
Rushmere St Andrew	149	56.59									
Saxmundham	304	181.65									
Southwold	186	115.07									
Wickham Market	120	127.68									