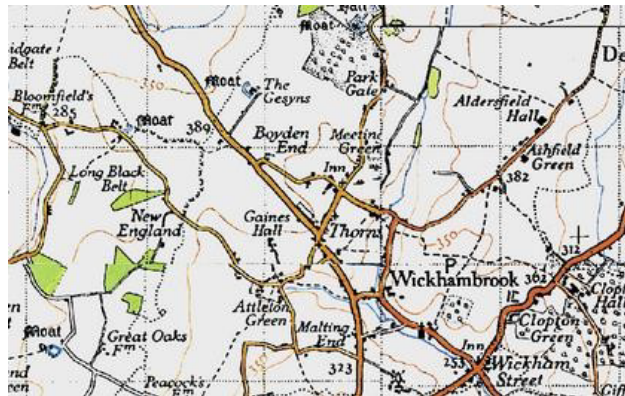


WICKHAMBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Action Plan 2026/27



CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Context	2
The Planning Cycle	2
What is a parish council?	3
What can we do?	4
Powers and Duties	4
Accountability	4
What do we do?	4
What we have achieved in the past eighteen months	5
Delivered	6
What do we want to do next?	7

Introduction

Context

This is our fifth Action Plan, prepared at a time of austerity and change across society when all organisations that provide services to the community, be they public, private or voluntary are facing cost pressures and resource restrictions. The emphasis is on value for money, efficiencies, collaboration and accepting that some things just will not get done. Changes to Local Government are being brought forward with Suffolk undergoing a major local government reorganisation that will replace the current two-tier system (Suffolk County Council and five district/borough councils) with three new unitary authorities, which are set to formally take control in May 2028. Through a planning process though, we can have a shared vision and direction, protect what is important and consider new ways of getting things done.

Although not new, encouraging others to help themselves and not to rely on things being done for them is as important as ever. The aspiration for West Suffolk has been set out elsewhere as being **‘committed to ensuring that everything we do takes account of the needs and views of local communities, residents, businesses and interest groups’**. That means communities that can help themselves, that have the networks and resources to find local solutions to local problems, and have the means to ensure that wherever possible those that do need services can access them at a time and in a way that is most suitable.

Wickhambrook Parish Council, as the first tier of local government, is uniquely situated to provide the forum for understanding and supporting the needs of this community. It provides advocacy on behalf of its residents, uses linkages to other organisations to bring in services, or directly procures them itself. Liaison with West Suffolk and Suffolk County Councils happens at all levels, and there are linkages to health and social care as well. Day-to-day, the Council will seek solutions for the community, looking for skills and volunteers to make improvements to our surroundings or bringing particular neighbourhood issues to local attention to promote a better quality of life for all.

Above all your Parish Council is here to help, support and encourage. This Plan tells you how.

The Planning Cycle

Planning (and performance) is a continuous process of gathering and assessing information, formulating actions, doing them, and then reviewing performance and gathering again.



Of course, at key stages one has to pause and reflect, and consider how the plan is evolving – and not just once per year, as the plan is relevant to every significant decision made.

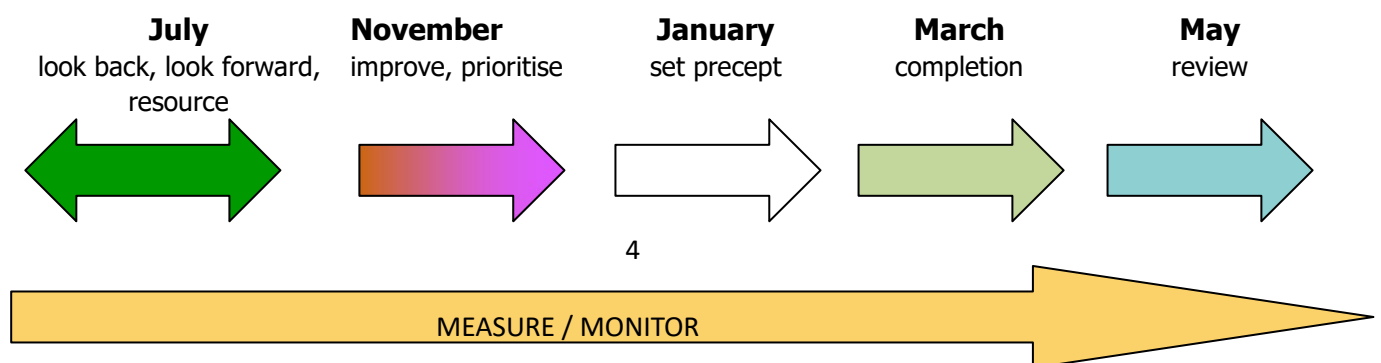
Once specific actions are agreed to deliver this Plan, they will be entered on the Actions Register, which will be monitored at every meeting of the Council.

Linkages

This Plan is linked very closely to the allocation of resources – mostly financial, but people’s time and energy too. Our finance is almost entirely derived from the Council Tax system, which follows the financial year April to March. Our precept, or ‘demand’, placed upon the Council Tax system has to be declared every January, in order that West Suffolk Council can calculate the overall tax collection sums for each eligible household and produce the billing required.

Key dates

Therefore this Plan will be drafted from November in each year, allowing it to evolve as the budget is also prepared, for final precept calculations in January. The Plan cycle will run from April to March, to match the funding available, and will be formally reviewed in May and November to assess achievements in the previous cycle, and progress in the current one.



What is a parish council?

There are two sorts of parishes whose boundaries do not always coincide:

- the Ecclesiastical Parishes centred on an Anglican church with a parochial church council and,
- the Civil Parishes, which are part of local administration, having a parish (or town) council.

A civil parish is an independent local democratic unit for villages, smaller towns, and suburbs of urban areas. Each parish has a Parish (or Town) Meeting consisting of all its local government electors and most (where the electorate exceeds 200) have a Parish or Town Council. Over 13 million people live in such parishes, with approximately 1279¹ in the parish of Wickhambrook.

The parish council is a small local authority. Its councillors are elected for four years at a time in the same way as for other councils. Bye-elections may be held to fill vacancies occurring between elections, or members may be co-opted onto the Council if no election is called. The council is the corporation of its parish in the Suffolk area, it covers the village of Wickhambrook and outlying Greens. In May each year the councillors choose a chairperson from amongst their number. Wickhambrook Parish is allocated eight councillors who make up the Parish Council, which employs a part-time Clerk to manage administration.

¹ Suffolk Observatory 2020

What can we do?

Powers and Duties

Parish councils have a number of formal powers, set out in a wide range of legislation. A duty is something that a council must do, a power is something that it may do, if it so decides. A parish council cannot do anything that is not permitted in law.

Parish Councils in Suffolk have lately become more significant, particularly with the proposed [local government re-organisation](#) and a move to unitary authorities. The parish councillors know the villages and can now represent their views directly to other authorities like West Suffolk and the Area Boards, Health Authorities, Police and Fire Authorities at County level.

The parish council is entitled to be consulted on planning applications², which include work to listed buildings and on proposals in conservation areas, and is sometimes consulted on such things as schools and roads. It puts the parish's case at public inquiries. Recent moves from Government toward greater 'localism' may increase the role of Parish Councils even further, especially in the field of development control and planning. An example of this is the Parish Council's [Neighbourhood Plan](#), which was formally adopted by West Suffolk Council on 16th December 2025 following a yes vote at Referendum, a parish led project which will help local people to identify and promote the right development for their community (whilst still meeting local and national planning guidance and requirements).

Accountability

You elect its members every four years - the next time will be May 2027 - and you are entitled to attend the annual parish meeting (held between 1st March and 1st June each year – usually on the last Thursday of April) and to say what you think. You can also go to every meeting of the Parish Council and meet the Council members, listen to their business and participate in the time especially set aside for that purpose at the start. The accounts are strictly audited every year and published.

You can find out more about what we do, how we do it, and our meetings on the parish website at <https://www.wickhambrook.org>

What do we do?

The Parish Council provides a number of direct services to the community, and acts as custodian to a number of assets held in the 'public name'.

A full [list of the parish assets](#) is listed on the website, but includes:

- Open Spaces (e.g. Six Acres, the Greens and Cemetery)
- Play equipment
- Street Furniture (Notice boards, benches, waste bins etc)
- The War Memorial, Chapel of Rest and Village Sign

² Generally, Outline Planning, Full Planning, Householder Applications, Listed Building Consents and Tree Preservation Orders

- Office Equipment

The Council is responsible for maintenance, repairs and insurance for these items and facilities.

Although West Suffolk Council is the Planning Authority, the Parish Council is consulted on most planning applications³ made in the parish. Councillors consider planning applications at their meetings and inform West Suffolk Council of their views, taking into account the objectives and policies set out in the [Neighbourhood Plan](#).

At each meeting of the Council, reports from our District and County Councillors are received (and we work with them to resolve issues which affect the parish). Each meeting considers issues for our communities such as:

- planning (for example, housing or tree felling)
- speeding and volume of traffic
- parish assets
- crime and community safety
- responding to consultations on issues which might affect our community.

Some matters, such as, facilities for young people, or items of maintenance in the 'public realm' that need reporting to appropriate authorities are dealt with by our Estates Committee.

The Council can act as advocate for residents, a conduit for communicating information, and will liaise with appropriate departments of other public authorities to ensure that views, comments and necessary actions are dealt with.

What we have achieved in the past Twelve months

Between April 2025 and March 2026, we have achieved a wide range of improvements, both to the way we work, and to the community we serve:

Meetings:

The Parish Council has held:

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

Finance:

Made 253 payments for services to the parish, including:

- Transferring £1095.83 to Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre (recycling grant)
- Grants to local organisations:
 - Carnival Committee (Fete & Flower Show) £ 240.24
 - Local History Society £ 492.60
 - Repairs to Memorial Clock £ 500.00
- In Kind Grants (as part of parish council grounds keeping):
 - Wickhambrook Outdoor Bowls Club £ 1008.16
 - Wickhambrook Tennis Club £ 206.00
 - Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre £2143.50
- Donated £300.00 to the following Charities
 - Royal British Legion
 - East Anglian Air Ambulance
 - East Anglian Childrens Hospices (EACH)
 - St Edmundsbury Newstalk

And received the following grants:

³ There are some exceptions, for example, Discharge of Conditions

- West Suffolk Council – Community Engagement £1000.00
 - Wickhambrook Outdoor Bowls Club – Donation of funds on closure £ 425.85
 - Bowls Club equipment (various) The cost of maintaining grounds and assets in the parish last year included:
 - Grounds Contract £13,335.60
 - Six Acres £ 280.00
 - Tree Surgery £ 690.00
 - Cemetery & Churchyard £ 1464.18
 - Play Areas, MUGA & Skate Park £ 4729.23
 - Greens £ -
 - Bin & Dog waste £ 801.61
- Total: £21,300.62**

Reviewed its policy statements and procedures for:

- **Governance** – including Financial Regulations, Financial Risk Assessments and Standing Orders
- **Information** – including Complaints, Data Protection, Document Retention, Media, Publication Scheme, Requests for Information and Information Technology
- **Organisation** - including Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety, Training Policy
- **Assets** – including Cemeteries Regulations and Fees; Six Acres Agreements and specification for grounds contract

Considered and responded to a range of consultations, including:

- West Suffolk Draft Local Plan
- Police & Crime Plan Consultation
- 29 Planning applications (an increase of 45% on the previous year), most of which were supported by this Council

Projects:

Our major project over the past year has been preparing the [Neighbourhood Plan](#), which received a YES vote at referendum, and was made (adopted) by West Suffolk Councils on 16th December 2025.

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, Penny Bayman, Sandra Law, Sue Sternberg and Tara Hayden.

The plan is now referenced clearly when the parish council considers applications for full planning permission or variations.

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Highways:

Unfortunately, despite the support of our County Councillor and Local MP, Nick Timothy, we have so far still 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.

Two new tube surveys of speed at Wickham Street were commissioned and undertaken in the spring of last year, and these, together with a survey of residents views, fed into a detailed report which was agreed by the parish council and submitted to Suffolk County Council in December '25, requesting a full report by Suffolk County Council on which both it and Suffolk Constabulary will be consulted before a decision is reached on whether a reduction in the speed limit will be agreed.

Last spring, we successfully recruited a team for Community Speed Watch, who are now carrying out regular Speed Watch surveys

Planning:

20 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 and plotting of Memorials (thanks to Andrea Grimes) – all our burial and deed records have now been uploaded to our new cemetery software
- Kevin running the VAS
- A stand at Wickhambrook Fete and Flower Show
- Seven volunteer mornings tidying the cemetery and play areas
- Six litter picks (with thanks to Mary Jolland and Barbara Merritt of WMSC and Councillors Andrea and Kevin Grimes)
- A move to a new .gov.uk website

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

- With Suffolk Public Rights of Way team, to investigate ways to improve the surfacing of BOAT 31 and reduce the impact of surface water flowing onto the track at Coltsfoot Green (now complete)
- 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;
- With the WI, who have planted hundreds of saplings at a new wildlife area between the Tennis Courts, Bowling Green and the School; and

Mary Jolland leading the Cemetery Tidying days and volunteers, Kathy Cordy, Andrea and Kevin Grimes, Mel Karunaratne, Mike Lavelle, Roger Medley and Tim O'Donnelly.

What do we want to do next?

The Parish Council reviewed its priorities for the next three years as part of the draft budget review in November.

The table below sets out the Action Plan adopted by the Council and arranged over the next three years:

Ser	Issue	Action	Lead Partners	Resource Implications	Timescale
Long-term Overview					

1	Maintain impetus of Action Plan	Formal and regular overview by Parish Council	WPC	Nil Time for Clerk @ 3 hours per quarter	Bi monthly (suggest combining with Budget Report)
2	Maintain relevance of Parish Plan	Annual review by WPC Presentation at Annual Parish Meeting	WPC	Nil Time for clerk 2 hours	April 2026
Facilities and Services					
3	Providing facilities for children, young people and families	Review the recreational area facilities and capture ideas for future consideration 1. Maintenance of equipment for children's play area – Cemetery Road & Bury Road 2. Improvements to surfacing beneath swings @ Bury Road 3. Improvements to surfacing beneath zip wire 4. Re-surfacing of Skate park 5. Re-surfacing of MUGA space 6. Improvements to fencing of childrens' play areas	WPC, Estates Committee Look for grant funding	Small consultation expenses & display boards Time for Clerk Match funding of equipment and installation costs	Complete 1 by June '26
Community Safety					
4	Emergencies and public health risks	Review Emergency plan & publish guidance to residents of parish	WPC West Suffolk Council Residents, Businesses and Volunteers	Some assistance available from Suffolk County Council for Emergency Plan advice	May '27
5	Accident and Public Health Risk	Encourage reporting of fly tipping to West Suffolk DC Maintain periodic 'litter pick'.	Residents, Businesses and Volunteers	Promotion time for Clerk	Ongoing 3 – 4 times a year
Culture, Leisure and Recreation					
Local Economy and Tourism					

6	Assisting the local economy, including encouraging tourism	Continued marketing of the church, countryside, walks, B&Bs, etc	WPC Estates Committee (Footpaths Officer) Clerk	Will evolve out of preparation of Neighbourhood Plan	Continuing
Education and Communications					
7	Improve communication of Parish Council activities	Monthly Parish News Facebook Page Noticeboards	WPC	Officer time	Continuing
Environment and Countryside					
8	Maintain support for conservation and restoration in village, greens and outlying and countryside	Continue recruiting volunteer support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Litter picking Cemetery maintenance Footpaths Hedging and tree planting 	WPC Volunteers Residents Farmers	Officer Time	Ongoing
9	Improve knowledge and understanding of Rights of Way, their use and accessibility	Advertise Rights of Way Standard Request feedback on condition of rights of ways walked by parishioners	WPC Footpaths Officer Farmers Residents	Time spent by clerk collating, reporting and liaising with PROW	Ongoing
Health and Social Care					
10	Improve support to older people	Consider establishing Suffolk Good Neighbour Scheme	WPC Volunteers West Suffolk Families and Communities Community Action Suffolk	To be established	Ongoing
Housing, Development and the Built Environment					
11	Taking forward local preferences when considering local planning applications.	Consider how profile of Planning applications can be raised	WPC	Clerk time	Ongoing

12	West Suffolk Council's respect for local views in determining housing strategy allocations	Clear reference to Neighbourhood Plan when responding to planning consultations Housing Survey Kept updated	WPC West Suffolk AECOM	Officer time	Ongoing
13	Development of Rural Exception Site if evidenced through NP preparation	Discussions with West Suffolk Council, Landowner of preferred site under draft local plan	WPC West Suffolk Strategic Housing Cambs ACRE/CAS	<£1000	monitor and review
Transport and Traffic					
14	HGV use of B1063 and C Routes through parish	Monitor	WPC	Clerk Time	Continuing
15	Road Safety/Reduction of speed in vicinity of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAS Monitoring & Reporting Increased use of footpaths and cycling Cross parish working Community Speedwatch 	WPC Road Safety Working Group Suffolk County Council Highways Suffolk Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerk time Grant funding Support through locality funding 	Current year
16	Road Safety/Reduction of Speed in Wickham Street	Monitor response to formal request submitted in December '25 .	WPC SCC Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerk time 	Current year
Parish Assets					
17	Repair to Cemetery Gates leading to Chapel of Rest	To replace the posts and re hang the gates and railings To remove gates and railings, powder coat Paint existing top finials	WPC	£ 2980.80 inc vat £ 2191.20 inc vat £ 417.60 inc vat	2027/28
18	Parish Lands	Updating HM Land Registry and registering Six Acres & Cemetery Land	WPC Suffolk County Council	Valuation £600 per parcel of Land £1500 plus Disbursements	Current FY

19	Cemetery Extension Project	Purchase of parcel of land to east of Cemetery for additional burial space. The priority for this may increase if changes to Environmental Permitting Regulations force larger burial plot sizes	WPC Local Land Owner SALC	£10 - £40K	On Hold
20	Churchyard Memorials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing by monumental mason • Routine testing 	WPC	<£600 Councillor and clerk time	2027-28 ongoing
Organisation/Governance					
22	Cemetery Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving accessibility to Councillors 	WPC	Officer time	Continuing
23	Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make use of support provided by Parish Insurers to review risk assessments for activities and events 	WPC	available through Parish Insurance	Ongoing