

**DRAFT - MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING OF WICKHAM ST PAULS PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON Tuesday 29th September 2026, AT 7.15pm**

In the Chair: Cllr. M. Cooper (Chairman)
Present Cllrs. Cllr J. Barlow (Vice-Chairman), Cllr. C. Groom, Cllr. P. Shipperley, Cllr. P. Snazell
Diane Jacob (Parish Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer)

District Cllr D. Holland
Two members of the public present.

26/085 Welcome and Apologies for Absence.

The Chairman welcomed everyone, apologies for absence received from County Cllr N. Robins (due to holiday).

26/086 Declaration of Interests.

None.

26/087 Public Participation Session with respect to items on the agenda and other matters that are of mutual interest.

A member of the public representing the church gave an explanation relating to the church grant request, item 26/100 below. A member of the public asked if the Parish Council could purchase a socket for the ground, so that the goal post on the village green can be moved around to help the grass surface to recover, Chairman to purchase and install.

It was noted that a local resident has a personal fitness trainer and is using the village green.

26/088 District and County Councillors to address the members if present.

County Cllr Robins not present but sent the following report:

Highways and the Pothole Emergency

One of the first priorities of the new Essex County Council administration was tackling the condition of our roads. Following the declaration of a Pothole Emergency, further investment has been made in highway maintenance. The number of dedicated repair crews has increased from nine to twelve, meaning every district now has its own crew. Repair activity remains above last year's level. July's results were 60% higher than in 2025, and August's were 30% higher. Since 1st May 998 repairs have been completed in Braintree District, the second-highest total among Essex districts.

Alongside reactive pothole repairs, Essex Highways continues to deliver resurfacing programmes and more permanent repairs where appropriate. The priority now is to maintain this momentum so residents see a sustained improvement in road conditions.

Highway safety initiatives also remain under review. Parish councils should note that the Local Highways Panel will end in March 2027.

Locally, I continue to report defects across the division and regularly follow up outstanding issues with Essex Highways to help ensure repairs are progressed as quickly as possible.

I encourage parish councils and residents to report defects directly through Essex Highways' online Report It service. This creates a unique reference number, ensures the defect is formally logged and allows its progress to be tracked. If you would like me to follow up a report on your behalf, please send me the reference number and I will raise it with the relevant officers.

Signed (Chairman).....

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Drainage

Between April and August 2025/26, 74,720 drainage defects were dealt with, a 20% increase on 2024/25. Four jetting units are currently operating across Essex.

This work is important because blocked drainage can quickly contribute to flooding and further damage to the road network.

I continue to work with residents and parish councils on local drainage and flooding concerns and will follow up outstanding reports where necessary.

Overgrown Hedges and Vegetation

Residents and landowners are responsible for cutting back privately owned hedges where they obstruct the highway or create a safety issue.

I would be grateful if parish councils could include a reminder in newsletters and parish magazines. Between June and August 2026, 18,025 vegetation issues were dealt with, and 729 enforcement letters have been issued since the start of the year.

Local Highway and Community Issues

During the past month, I have continued working with residents and parish councils on a range of matters, including:

- Potholes and carriageway defects.
- Drainage and flooding concerns.
- Overgrown vegetation affecting highway safety.
- Public Rights of Way enquiries.
- Road safety concerns.
- Requests for resurfacing and other highway improvements.
- Liaison with Essex Highways and other County Council officers to progress local issues.

I remain committed to working with parish councils to resolve local concerns and welcome any County Council matters you wish to raise.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government delayed responding to Essex County Council's judicial review on four occasions. We have now received confirmation that the Government's Local Government Reorganisation decision for Essex has been withdrawn while the wider programme is reviewed.

This means district council elections will take place in May 2027 on the existing council boundaries.

We are awaiting further information about the date of the Greater Essex mayoral election and the arrangements for a combined authority should this be what the government wants to pursue. The administration supports devolution and the creation of a combined authority in principle, but there is still significant work to be done to determine how this should operate.

We agree that change is needed, but it must be the right change: properly planned, financially responsible and designed around the needs of Essex residents and the services they rely on.

Net Zero

The new administration has ended Essex County Council's Net Zero programme, stopping spending on initiatives it considered ideological and not the best use of taxpayers' money. The changes are projected to save £3 million over four years.

This does not mean the Council is stepping back from its responsibilities to protect residents or maintain essential services. Investment will continue in practical measures such as flood prevention, drainage improvements, highway maintenance and resilience planning where these form part of the Council's statutory duties and provide clear benefits to residents.

The administration's approach is to focus resources on effective frontline services and practical environmental measures that provide clear value for Essex taxpayers.

Fostering in Essex

Essex County Council is encouraging more people to consider fostering. Around 500 foster families currently care for more than 750 children.

Recruiting more local carers can help vulnerable children remain close to their schools, friends and support networks while providing the stability and security they need.

Operation Vanguard

Operation Vanguard has been announced and launched 14/9/26 in response to concerns around safety and ASB within the 3 towns

The initial three-month pilot will place security operatives in Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford town and city centres. They will provide a visible presence, reassure residents and help deter and prevent antisocial behaviour. Essex County Council is also seeking discussions with the Home Office about the additional pressure placed on local services.

Local Casework

Supporting residents remains a significant part of my role as your County Councillor.

Alongside attending meetings at County Hall, I continue to assist residents with individual casework involving highways, transport, education, flooding, Public Rights of Way and other Essex County Council services.

District Cllr Holland updated the Parish Council on the following:-

Cllr Holland gave an update on the new Braintree District Council local plan consultation 19, which is out for public consultation and why it is important to have a local plan to help protect local areas. Local Government Reorganisation, which is no longer going ahead by National Government and local various funding opportunities were discussed.

26/089 Planning Matters.

Item 1. No Updates.

Item 2. No new applications.

26/090 Minutes.

To confirm the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 28th July 2026.

The above minutes were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

Proposed by Cllr. Barlow seconded by Cllr. Snazell, all in favour, resolution passed.

26/091 The Village Green.

Previous minute number 26/075 To discuss and consider landownership near Fox Yard around the village pond.

Awaiting further information – item deferred – to be on the next agenda.

26/092 Village pond opposite the Victory Inn.

It was confirmed that a working group has cleared the pond of building rubble and a skip was ordered at a cost of £312.00 Inc VAT.

Proposed by Cllr. Barlow seconded by Cllr. Snazell, all in favour, resolution passed.

26/093 Horse chestnut tree.

The horse chestnut tree near the village hall car park entrance/exit to consider the lower branches. It was agreed by the Parish Council to leave the branches at the existing height – no further action required.

Proposed by Cllr. Snazell, seconded by Cllr. Cooper, all in favour, resolution passed.

26/094 Harvest & Pet Service.

Previous minute number 26/070. Permission granted to use the village green.

Proposed by Cllr. Cooper seconded by Cllr. Barlow, all in favour, resolution passed.

26/095 Remembrance Service 2026

Permission granted to hold the Remembrance Service on the village green on Sunday November 8th at 10.45am. Risk assessment has been received.

Proposed by Cllr. Snazell, seconded by Cllr. Barlow, all in favour, resolution passed.

26/096 Trafalgar Event 2026.

Item 1. It was discussed, confirmed that in 2019 the initial cheque given to the Parish Council was £2,178.27, and was paid into the bank on 30th January 2019. Noted.

Item 2. This year 2026 will be the last year that the Parish Council will be assisting with this event.

Propose by Cllr Snazell, seconded by Cllr Groom, all in favour resolution passed.

26/097 Insurance for events and activities on the Village Green.

The Parish Council Insurance **will not offer any cover** for activities not organised and supervised by the Parish Council. The organiser should consider making their own arrangements for Public Liability insurance. For charities and not-for profit organisations with an annual income below £100,000, the online self-service policy may be suitable. Please see the link [Zurich Charity Insurance](#) This was discussed and noted.

26/098 Shelter.

The three quotes received to repair the roof of the shelter opposite the Victory Inn were discussed and considered. It was agreed to accept the quote for repairs to the roof with new cedar shingles from Shuttlewood Roofing at a total cost of £5,460.00 including VAT. Cllr Cooper to explore funding and the figure to be added into the 2027/2028 budget. Proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Barlow all in favour resolution passed.

26/099 Play Equipment for the under 5s.

To discuss and consider purchasing and providing play equipment for the under 5s.

Cllr Cooper and Cllr Snazell to contact suppliers for recommendations of type of equipment, to obtain quotes and to explore and apply for any funding that maybe available. Item to be on the next agenda with an update.

Proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Snazell all in favour resolution passed.

26/100 Grant request from the Church.

To discuss and consider a grant request (as per application form) for financial help for the churchyard, in particular the pollarding of the horse chestnut tree in the churchyard. The application from the church was discussed and considered and a grant of £500.00 was awarded.

Proposed by Cllr Snazell, seconded by Cllr Barlow, all in favour resolution passed.

26/101 Parish Calendar 2027/2028.

It was agreed to adopt the Parish Calendar and Wednesday evening of the 17th March was agreed to hold the Annual Parish Assembly 2027.

Proposed by Cllr Barlow, seconded by Cllr Cooper all in favour resolution passed.

26/102 Internal Auditor.

It was agreed to appoint Jan Stobart at a cost of £280.00 as the internal auditor for financial year 2026/2027, and also to allow for the cost of an external audit for 2026/2027 in the next budget.

Proposed by Cllr Cooper, seconded by Cllr Snazell all in favour resolution passed.

26/103 Previous minute number 26/080.**Item 1. Footpaths – Public Rights of Way.**

Further information required, item to be on the next agenda.

Signed (Chairman).....

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Item 2. Land Registry. Further information required, item to be on the next agenda.

26/104 Matters Arising.

There were a number of long-term items beyond our control and decisions that have not progressed and these are only being discussed at the meeting where there is a development.

Item 1. Previous minute number 21/039 Verges. Erosion to verges on Old Road – Update required by Highways.

Item 2. Previous minute number 24/098 New Projects. Possible new projects were discussed, one possible for further consideration was for underground armoured electricity cable to the village green – and water to the village green to make it easier when holding events. No update by Cllr Cooper.

Item 3. Wickham St Pauls Consolidated Trust – No update.

Item 4. Previous minute number 25/040 Road outside Village Hall known as The Green and leading to Oak Farm. To discuss and consider the ownership and responsibility of the road, Cllr Snazell still in communication with Essex County Council Highways and County Cllr Nathan Robins, item still ongoing.

Item 6. Previous minute number 25/093 Item 1 and 2 - Shellards Lane – No update by District Cllr Holland – item ongoing.

Item 7. Previous minute number 25/109 Land adjacent to Scriveners fields. Already reported to Enforcement – no update by District Cllr Holland – item ongoing.

Cllr Snazell reported that he was in contact with Anglian Water regarding new water mains site works along School Road and also Essex County Council Highways after Anglian water have completed their work.

26/105 Financial Matters.

- 1) Financial Statement for (Items to be approved for payment and signed as per payment schedule).

	CHEQUE No.	TOTAL
Colne Skip Hire Inv. No. 23744	PAID	312.00
Dynamic Fireworks	002716	848.27
One Stop Promotions	002717	22.68
JPB Landscapes Inv. 2057	002718	264.00
Wickham St Pauls Cricket Club	002719	1,200.00
Wickham St Pauls Village Hall Fund Inv. 2563 and Inv. 2667	002720	16.00
Derek Stokes (Reimbursement as per receipts)	002721	51.90
Employee (Salary for September)	DD	600.00
Employee (Salary adjustment including back pay for September)	26722	162.32
HM Revenue & Customs (For September)	002723	270.99
Employee (Expenses for August/September as per receipts)	002724	68.32
Employee (Salary for October)	DD	600.00
Employee (Salary adjustment for October)	002725	60.07
HM Revenue & Customs (October)	002726	226.21
HandyKing Inv.392	002728	390.00
Playquip Inv.9730 (Repairs to swing links)	002729	309.00
Paul Snazell (Reimbursement as receipts)	002730	18.20
Parish Clerk (Reimbursement as per receipt)	002731	12.76

- 2) Monthly Budget Statement. Received and noted.
- 3) It was discussed and confirmed that the bank accounts are dual signature and to arrange bankline (in order to be able to make online authorised payments). In future payments will be direct by online transfers.
- 4) It was confirmed that the second half of the precept has been received.

Proposed by Cllr Cooper seconded by Cllr. Shipperley, all in favour resolution passed.

26/106 Co-option.

Item 1. Members of the public left the meeting.

Item 2. Parish Councillors discussed and considered candidate by a signed ballot, in accordance with the Wickham St Pauls Parish Council co-option policy.

Clerk counted the votes and as the decision was not unanimous, the candidate was not co-opted.

26/107 Items for next agenda.

Please note that no decisions can be lawfully made under this item, LGA 12 10 (2) (b) states that business must be specified therefore the council cannot lawfully raise matters for decision.

Any new items to be sent to the Clerk as soon as possible, so that they can appear on the next agenda.

26/108 Date of Next Meeting.

Parish Council Meeting Tuesday 24th November 2026 (7.15pm)

Meeting closed at 9.15 pm.