

## WICKHAM SKEITH PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 11 May 2026 in Wickham Skeith Village Hall

**Chairman:** Harriet Bowes

**In Attendance:** Tina Newell (TN) (Clerk) and fifteen members of the public.

11526/pm01 **Welcome:** Harriet Bowes as Chair Person of the Parish Council welcomed all to the meeting thanking them for their attendance.

11526/pm02 **To receive and consider apologies for absence:** None.

11526/pm03 All present noted there were no minutes from the meeting held in 2025  
The following groups presented their annual reports:

11526/pm04 **The History Group:** History Group continues to thrive after 22 years with our meetings attracting between 15 & 30 people. Perhaps the high point of the last year was our celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day when a number of villagers shared with us the experiences of their family members in WWII. Other “home-grown” meetings involved some of Alistair Govan’s ever-popular Village Videos & we heard about a number of Wickham Skeith characters of the 1950s from Nigel Merriam. We also had a number of other speakers. Several had a medieval flavour (literally in one case) - Accidents and Emergencies in the Middle Ages, Medieval Schools & Education & one on Tudor Food. We also learnt about the Burston School Strike. We think that we offer a varied programme, but we are always interested in any suggestions for future speakers or activities. We had an excellent visit to St Edmundsbury Cathedral in August 2025. In July this year we will be going to the Sutton Hoo Ship’s Company’s project who are building a full-size replica of the ship buried in 625 AD.

11526/pm05 **Parochial Church Council:** We were delighted to welcome Revd Dan Cant as the new rector of the Bacton Benefice at the beginning of April 2025. At the APCM on April 28th after the total revision of the Electoral Roll there were 26 people on the Roll, of whom 21 were resident within the parish and 5 non-residents. The average weekly attendance was 11 when all special services were discounted, a small increase from last year. We have continued with a monthly Café Church when all present join in the discussion. The Harvest collection at the end of September resulted in a substantial amount of tinned & dried food being sent to the Stowmarket Food Bank for which they were very grateful. The monetary collection of £69 was sent to UNICEF.

These minutes are in draft form only and are not a matter of formal record. They will be presented at the next Annual Parish meeting for approval 1

The Remembrance service in church resulted in a collection of £78.76 for the Royal British Legion. 45 came to the candlelit carol service held at 4pm on 13th December and 21 to the Christmas Eve service held once again at 9pm to simplify staffing. These numbers were slightly increased from 2024. The Christmas collections for Children in Need totalled £160.65.

In 2025, there were no baptisms in church, 1 wedding and 4 funerals. St Andrew's hosted 4 benefice services during 2025. The members of the PCC met 4 times during 2025 plus the annual meeting. There were also meetings of the Benefice Council which consists of a representative from each parish who meet to discuss service rotas and affairs affecting everyone. Our fund-raising committee has continued to work to raise funds towards the tower roof repairs. Jean Willoughby retired from the group but Jilly Newstead and Lesley Holland joined to help so that committee is now 5. Events were well supported and provided fun and happy social occasions as well as generous monetary support: Pete's Quiz had to be postponed from April to September for lack of bookings on the earlier date, the Grand National Sweepstake, a talk about the church bells, the Christmas Pudding Stir-up in November and an exhibition of cribs. Margaret's regular Book Sale Coffee mornings from Spring through to Autumn continue to be well supported and Pennies boxes are still occasionally handed in. Mike Hubbard of Mellis continues to mow the churchyard regularly from March through to November. Costs were maintained last year. He makes sure the area is tidy and also mows the conservation area in August. Thanks once again go to all the people who contribute in so many ways to the life and upkeep of the Church community and building, especially the fund raisers, cleaners and flower arrangers and particularly to Sue Merriam, Louise Reinders & Jos Bryant who help Margaret & Liz with the unlocking and locking of the church each day. Liz Davidson and Margaret Jones-Evans, our churchwardens, deserve thanks for all that they do but St Andrew's is a church whose welcoming atmosphere comes from all its members.

11526/pm06

**Country Dancing:** We had our inaugural meeting in October 2025 and we had about 10 dancers. We are members of the English Folk Dance & Song Society (soon to be English Folk) and as such are covered by their Public Liability Insurance. We often use recorded music but it is augmented by my husband playing his melodeon or even both of us. We meet now every 3rd Wednesday of the month from 7pm to 10pm. The idea of the 'club' was really to have a little fun while keeping fit and making new friends. Country dancing comes under various names such as barn dancing and Ceilidh dancing. Something many people did at primary school and forgot all about

it until they attended their friend's wedding! It is a social dance that means it is usually done with a partner and as a caller (myself) it is up to me to go through the dance by walking and then call the moves when everyone dances. It can be done by any age and any gender and most people find the best bit is when they go wrong! We have most months 8-12 people attend and we stop for refreshments part of the way through the evening. The entry fee is £5 to cover the cost of the hall, the Public Liability Insurance and refreshments, but children under 16 are free. We have not as yet had any children attend but they would welcome with a dancing parent or guardian! We could do with more members as that means we can vary the dances more and people have a chance for a rest. Last month we had another 4 new members come along who we hope to see on the 20th May! This October we will be 2 years old and I'm hoping by that point we can organise our own ceilidh to celebrate!

11526/pm07

**The Wildlife Group:** Continue to have an active programme of ambles, identification and recording of wildlife, and practical work in the churchyard and on the village green. In the last year the Wickham Skeith group held fortnightly morning ambles trying to cover as much of the parish as possible. We held longer walks, including a Summer Sunday walk, and summer and autumn walks to Thornham. We had a small display at the Village Fete and held a Wildlife Weekend on 12-13 July showing the film Microcosmos and hosting a visit to a 'wild' garden on the Sunday where we tried a Flower-Insect Timed Count. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2025 the Parish Council funded a wild flower training course. In the morning, we learned how to use 'keys' to identify plants, and in the afternoon practice session identified 77 species in the churchyard alone. A follow-up site visit with the tutors helped further identification skills in 'wild' gardens along the Street. In August, we located six bat recording devices for a week in gardens along the river and near the green, and in the churchyard. Eight species of bats were recorded in varying frequency at all sites. A ninth, Daubentons Bat, was recorded at sites near water. We are taking part in the Green Spaces survey of the village green and churchyard which runs between April and June 2026 and have recorded nesting Kestrels, Tree Creeper and Moorhen. We set up a project page on i-naturalist and recorded 162 species of plants, insects and a few birds/mammals in the 2025 half-year. Most birds and mammals remained unrecorded due to need for photographs to be uploaded! A new project was created for 2026 and we already have over 100 observations, becoming more adept at adding bird song recordings. The recording facility is open to anyone to upload photos which can be identified by a 'global' community. We are

learning just how diverse and abundant our parish wildlife is. In October we held a half-day session looking at the archive of parish maps and how we can link history and wildlife. The Group held four work parties over the winter to help improve wildlife habitats. Two in the churchyard, as part of Love Your Yew Week, cleared ivy, nettle and rubbish from beneath the five-trunked yew and created a new compost area. Two work parties removed pond-side vegetation to improve the views from the new benches. We have asked through the Parish Council that an area of the green remains uncut to allow flowers and insects to flourish. The Toad Patrol showed how dramatically our toad population has fallen with only 11 live toads being lifted and 11 found squashed. Membership of the Wildlife Group is open to everyone; there is no membership fee. Residents can join the email group and/or the WhatsApp group. We would like to extend our activities to include more people. Check out our project page at <https://uk.inaturalist.org/projects/wickham-skeith-wildlife-2026>

11526/pm08

**Parish Council:** From May to September 25 there was no clerk, the previous one had disappeared. Tara Goodacre was temporary clerk in September's meeting – Thanks to her Tina Newell was invited to become our clerk at the end of September 25, we interviewed her, myself, and councillors Tom Rowe, Amanda Noller, Jeanette Creasy and agreed to take her on. I took on the chair at that point, knowing we had a good clerk, no one else was keen. Previously there had been a roving chair. Tamsin Little joined later in the Autumn, after Tom Rowe had made an impassioned speech to get more councillors. We have two more potential councillors. Jeanette Creasy resigned, she has been an active councillor and did a lot of work including the emergency plan and chasing up highways and water supplier when there was water flowing in Daisy Green Lane. Thanks to Jeanette. Richard Palmer has also resigned. Although he hadn't attended meetings much recently, he has been a councillor for many years. Thanks to Richard for all his work. Tina has worked very hard and has been supportive, but she has had to resign due to personal reasons. Thanks to Tina for all her work. There has been no planning applications. Other on-going issues include the pylon route and especially important, speeding in the village.

11526/pm09

**County Council:** Andrew Stringer as County Councillor gave thanks to the Parish Council and those that attended meetings for their support and confirmed the results from the recent Traffic Survey, of which was funded from the County Councils locality grant, are to be discussed at a meeting with Highways on 21 May 2026; Andrew suggested the new administration at the County may trigger a review of the HGV routes and may challenge the

decision for three unitary Councils. A full report was received prior to the meeting and is appended to these minutes.

11526/pm10 **District Council:** District Councillor Rowland Warbouys issued an Annual report prior to the meeting and highlighted the budget for 2026/27 from this report at the meeting.

Public Open Forum:

11526/pm11 A villager congratulated the Village Hall Committee for all the hard work that it takes to run the hall and the numerous opportunities it offers to residents.

11526/pm12 Whilst there was no formal report from the Lunch Club a villager confirmed after 22 years the club is still going strong with around 30 attending every month; the price of a two course meal with tea/coffee has had to increase to £5 but all agreed this continues to offer fantastic value for money and a raffle is held to raise fund to contribute to the hall hire.

11526/pm13 A villager confirmed the 'Hill Top Womens Group' and 'Craftaroom' still meet and invited all to read the village magazine for news and updates from all clubs and organisations.

11526/pm14 It was noted there is to be no village fete this year and all offered thanks to the committee for the successful fetes held in previous years.

11526/pm15 It was agreed to hold the 2027 Annual Parish meeting on Monday 10 May 2027 at the village hall.

11526/pm16 The meeting closed at 7.36pm