

Question to: County Councillor Nicoll & District Councillor Poulter:

Complaints about the Wickham Market Parish Council considered by the District Council Monitoring Officer are kept out of the public domain. “Corporate finance failings”, “inadequate grant procedures”, “circumvention of proper process”, a “toxic & dysfunctional culture” and “a lack of councillor training” have all been stated in Monitoring Officer responses to complaints.

The Nolan Principles and then the Localism Act of 2011 were intended to restore public confidence in local governance.

What would the Cllrs suggest to residents who do not have confidence in Wickham Market Parish Council?

Public forum:

Village hall

“Wickham Market parish council owns the village hall and grounds. There has been a nine year long process of attempting to improve the facilities which has failed to deliver either a new village hall or a comprehensive refurbishment to date.

It would appear that three separate organisations set up by the Parish Council to devolve the village hall responsibility have all operated almost entirely outside of the public domain. Around £50k of public money has been spent so far on professional fees for a new build project there were, and are, no funds to build. There was not even a strategy to raise the £1.5M required. **No plan at all!**

The public have been fundraising yet there is no public account of how much each event has raised or an ongoing total.

The public have basically been locked out of village hall decisions and the closed shop membership has failed to deliver. It is time that the public, and particularly the younger people of our village, were actively encouraged to be involved to bring their skills and energy to what should be a community project involving everybody.

When and precisely how will the run down village hall, flooded car park, scruffy ancillary buildings and playing fields be effectively managed when the current strategy is for more of the same? It is ridiculous to perpetuate this nonsense by signing the village hall away in yet another lease. Will councillors do the responsible thing and stand down having consistently failed to deliver for our village?

Pasture fields

“We are now at the end of a six yearlong neighbourhood plan process - **Neither the Penny Field nor Mill Lane pasture fields have been added to the list of Local Green Spaces.** Small village pasture fields are accepted as an increasingly rare and valuable resource. These two pasture fields are of almost unique local value as they are grazed by Suffolk Punch horses and represent the majority of permanent pastureland close to the village. Any responsible PC would recognise these facts and take steps to protect these spaces. A PC declined Freedom of Information request and subsequent complaint has released landowner meeting notes into the public domain. **The notes state a known potential development, in the long term, of both fields for housing as well as for a car park at Mill Lane and yet no attempt to protect the fields has been made. Are the individuals involved in the neighbourhood plan suitable if they fail to recognise these assets and attempt to protect them? “**

