TO WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCILLORS

**Wickham Market Shed Project**

As you know the Wickham Market Partnership has been trying to develop a Men’s Shed project for the village. Having established the need for such a venture back in January 2020 it is clear, from the events of the last 18 months, that the need is even greater in terms of improving the well-being of local residents.

Despite the negative outcome from the Diocese for the Glebe site we have been undeterred and in fact had reached the point where we felt we should approach our landlord at the Resource Centre, Suffolk County Council, to investigate the possibility of siting a unit in the rear garden. However, it is likely this would have been a smaller unit and times of operation may have had to be limited.

Coincidentally we became aware that the Wickham Market Area Archive Centre (WMAAC) is looking to down-size, firstly by sending its more valuable and less well-used archives to The Hold (the Suffolk Record Office) for safekeeping and secondly, finding a new and more secure location for the local records used for research.

Since that point circumstances have moved very swiftly and positively:

* The Archive Committee has offered its sheds and portacabins for use by the Shed project, already beginning to clear some space.
* The WMAAC is looking to make a case to have a smaller unit sited at the Library/Resource Centre.
* The newly appointed Library Manager is extremely keen to see the archives moved to the library site (he is himself an archivist). The Partnership has been helping to bring the interested parties together.
* Shed members have viewed the portacabins and sheds near the Village Hall and deemed them very suitable for their current needs – the bonus is the outside space associated with them which lends itself to outdoor working and socialising and the fact that electricity is already on site.

A meeting was held there on 2nd July to establish that Shed members would like to take this forward and the site also has the support of our UK Men’s Shed Association (UKMSA) Ambassador for this area, Doug Mizon.

We are aware that the new lease for the Village Hall is being prepared which will alter the responsibilities for the land currently associated with it, so it is important that we follow the correct protocols for informing stakeholders and working with them at the earliest opportunity.

There are many steps to go through before the Shed becomes a more formal entity, but the Partnership will support members all the way, with grant seeking, constitutions, policies and so forth. In the meantime they will assess and repair a range of tools which have already been donated to the project, many of them from a former member who passed away last year.

This is a really important and positive project for the village and one we know you have already shown support for. We would therefore like to invite Councillors to meet with some of our Shed members and Trustees of the Partnership to view the site and consider how we go forward, and suggest the dates of Monday 26th July or 2nd August at 2.30pm. Please would you raise this at your next Parish Council meeting as an agenda item. If you would like to discuss the project at any point we are always happy to oblige. Please contact our Administrative Assistant, Amy Drayson in the first instance at resource.centre1@btinternet.com or leave a message on 01728 747782. The lead for the project is Cath Caudwell.