

Draft minutes not yet accepted

**WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 14 MAY 2024
WICKEN MISSION HALL**

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):
B Pepper, L Houghton (chair), R Barnes, J Rogers, S Wilson, M Hawes, P Rash, S Hill, C Robinson and District Councillor Vellacott and Ellis Selway from the National Trust.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from District Councillor Bovingdon and County Councillor Hunt.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair handed the meeting to the Clerk. Cllr Houghton had decided to step down from the role of Chair.

Election of Chair

Cllr Bill Pepper was proposed by Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Wilson. All were in favour.

Election of Vice Chair

Cllr Rogers was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Pepper. All were in favour.

The meeting was handed to the new Chair.

3. Acceptance of Office

The Chair and Vice Chair accepted the roles and signed the acceptance of office.

4. To Receive Declarations of Interest

- a) Councillors to declare any personal interest in any items on the agenda.
- b) Councillors to declare any prejudicial interest in any items on the agenda and to inform the Chairman if they wish to speak on the matter during public participation.
- c) Councillors to declare any pecuniary interest in any items on the agenda.

Cllr Wilson declared an interest in item 9.1.

5. Appointment of Committee and Trustees

Burial Board	Cllr Houghton Cllr Barnes Cllr Wilson Cllr Hill
Allotment Committee	Cllr Wilson Cllr Rash Cllr Barnes
Recreation Committee	Cllr Hawes Cllr Robinson
Mary Hatch Alms Houses	Cllr Wilson
Village Hall Committee	Cllr Wilson

Representative on Wicken Fen Forum	Cllr Pepper Cllr Robinson
The Chair and Vice Chair were members of all Parish Council committees	

6. Public Participation.

The meeting will be adjourned for up to 10 minutes to allow any members of the public and Councillors declaring a prejudicial interest to address the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted at that meeting.

Ellis Selway updated the Parish Council on the peatland restoration project being undertaken by the National Trust on Howes Bank, Spinney Bank and Tubney Fen (Burwell Parish). It was noted that the owner for Spinney Bank was working with the National Trust but there was dispute over the ownership of Howes Bank.

The work would mean a temporary diversion of the footpath from 1 August 2024 to 1 November 2024.

Ellis Selway left the meeting at 8pm

7. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 12 March 2024, 2024

The minutes were agreed as a true and correct copy and signed by the Chair.

8. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 12 March 2024

8.1 Mission Hall BT manhole –This was ongoing.

8.2 The memorial stability testing had taken place. A number of memorials were unstable, and the clerk would start to contact families.

8.3 Allotment access road and Maltings footpath– this was ongoing.

8.4 Anglian Water concerns regarding Lower Road and Chapel Lane – Anglian Water were unable to provide a quarterly report. Issues would be monitored and reported.

8.5 Repair of Village Sign –This was ongoing.

8.6 Refurbishment of the Changing Rooms – Cllr Pepper would discuss with Dan Hardingham

8.7 Repair of the Church Wall – The Ely Diocese had advised that a faculty was required. The clerk would apply.

8.8 Hawes Lane – The clerk was yet to contact Highways regarding the culvert at the bottom of Hawes Lane.

8.9 Hedge Adjacent to the Mission Hall Car Park – The clerk was awaiting a response from the homeowner.

8.10 Lower Road Ditch –The clerk would write to the landowners explaining about Riparian responsibility of ditches.

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8.11 Back Lane Road Surface – The surface had been repaired by Highways.

8.12 Pond Green Posts – Les Yardy would complete the work as requested.

8.13 Kings Coronation Oak – The oak had been planted on the Upware Open Space by the URA and Cllr Pepper had planted the oak on the Mission Hall Green. The clerk would look into getting a plaque.

8.14 Pond Green Play Area Signage – Signs had been ordered. Cllr Pepper would install.

8.15 Church Road Flooding – The clerk would obtain photographs the next time it rained and would report to Highways.

8.16 Wicken Lode – An interesting Environmental Agency report had been published by a parishioner on Facebook regarding access rights for Wicken residents using Wicken Lode.

9. Planning Matters

9.1 Erection of 2 three-bedroom semi-detached bungalows with off-street parking and associated landscaping (Scheme C). Site to the East of 38A Chapel Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/00318/FUL

Cllr Wilson left the meeting at 8.20pm

The Parish Council had the following concerns:

- The proposal is outside the defined development envelope for Wicken.
- Wicken has particularly suffered with speculative development that has yet to be assimilated into the small community so allowing more seems contrary to the fully adopted Local Plan 2015.
- The proposal is deemed over development of the site due to the mass and bulk and closeness of the proposed dwellings and adjacent dwellings.
- The Parish Council has concerns regarding the sewage system. In recent months there has been a problem with overflowing effluent in the village. The heavy rain caused the sewage system to fail, and raw sewage overflowed in the gardens of 28 and 31 Chapel Lane. The Parish Council would like Anglian Water to be consulted directly.
- The Parish Council is concerned about the surface water and drainage.
- Biodiversity net gain – we note that the developers have cleared the site.

Cllrs Wilson rejoined the meeting at 8.32pm

9.2 Change of use of first floor gym above garage to holiday let accommodation and ancillary accommodation to host dwelling. Walnut Tree Cottage 8 Back Lane Wicken Ely Cambridgeshire. Ref 24/00019/FUL. Update of design

The request for the extension to time for the Parish Council comments had been denied. The original concerns raised by the Parish Council had been carried forward.

9.3 To deliver peatland restoration at Wicken Fen NNR by March 2025 - Howes Bank Howes Bank Wicken Fen Nature Reserve Lode Lane Wicken Cambridgeshire. Ref 24/00362/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections but noted the ownership dispute.

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9.4 To deliver peatland restoration at Wicken Fen NNR by March 2025, Spinney Bank. Spinney Bank Wicken Fen Nature Reserve Lode Lane Wicken Cambridgeshire. Ref 24/00361/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections.

9.5 Updates on Planning Application Approve/Refused by ECDC

Approved

- Change of use of first floor gym to holiday let accommodation and ancillary accommodation to host dwelling. Walnut Tree Cottage, Back Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/00019/FUL
- Construction of single storey rear extension. 8 The Crescent, Wicken. Ref 24/00005/FUL

10. County and District Councillor Reports

District Councillor Vellacott advised the following:

- Congratulated Cllr Houghton on her successful time as Chair
- Had written to DEMAT objecting to the removal of the prioritisation for Wicken, Padney and Upware children on the Admissions Policy for St Andrews.
- The culvert at Upware was still blocked. Work had taken place at the entrances of the culvert but not removing the blockage.
- Had contacted Sargeant Lupton-Pike regarding speeding in the village and had requested mid-evening speed checks.
- Leading a campaign in Soham to be aware of ducks crossing the road and was pushing for signage.
- ECDC Annual Meeting would take place 23 May 2024.
- ECDC had agreed a new Domestic Violence policy.
- Work on the Wicken-Soham cycle path would be starting soon.
- Would continue to push for an improved bus service.
- East Cambridgeshire had agreed funding for 2 youth events. It was hoped that one would take place in Soham.

District Councillor Vellacott left the meeting at 8.55pm

11. Internal Auditors Report

The 2023/24 accounts had been audited by David Leonard MSc, CDipAF, CPIM in his role as Internal Auditor. The audit had been clean and unqualified.

12. Approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

The Parish Council answered Yes to all sections of the Annual Governance Statement for 2023.24. The AGAR form was signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

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13. Approval of the Accounting Statements 2023/24

The Council agreed that the Accounting Statements 2023/24 presented fairly the financial position of the authority, and this was signed by the Chairman and the Clerk.

14. Approval of the Standing Orders

This would be carried forward to the June meeting.

15. Approval of the Financial Regulations

This would be carried forward to the June meeting.

16. ROSPA Report of the recreation Ground and Pond Green Play Area

The RoSPA report had been received. The minor issues would be worked through.

17. Consultation on Soham and Barway Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council supported the Town Council and congratulated them on a through plan.

18. Upware Residents Association

Cllrs Barnes and Wilson had attended the URA meeting. Cllr Pepper would attend the next meeting.

- Request for water to be installed on the Open Space

The Parish Council felt the cost of getting water installed would be too great.

- Request to hold a village event on the Open Space

The Parish Council were happy for this to take place. The clerk would advise on the use of inflatables should these be part of the event.

- Request for the brambles to be dug up.

The Parish Council agreed to continue to ask the grass cutting contractors to cut the brambles each time the grass was cut and would ask for them to be sprayed in the winter.

19. Update from Wicken Fen Forum

Cllrs Pepper and Robinson had attended the Wicken Fen Forum meeting and reported the following:

- The Environmental Agency would investigate why the reeds on Wicken Lode had not been cut as this should be an open water way.
- The Environmental Agency were encouraging the badgers to move to the new set, but they had not yet moved.
- Signage would be installed regarding the use of cycles, Ebikes and Escooters.
- The project to redesign the cycle bridge at Burwell Cock Up had not progressed due to the need to create a design which was accessible for all.

20. Vandalism on the Pond green Play Area. Decision Regarding Replacement Equipment and Insurance Claim

The cost to replace the rocker which had been vandalised was £2613.10 plus VAT. This was covered by the insurance, but Zurich Insurance renewals team could not confirm if making a

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claim would affect future premiums. Claiming on the insurance for a replacement rocker was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Wilson. All were in favour.

21. Walk Over Tree Survey Report

The walk over tree survey had taken place and the written report received. There were 16 low and medium priority items and no high priority items.

- **Removal of bough of the willow tree**

The bough of the willow tree above Mr and Mrs Beloe's bench needed to be removed for health and safety reasons. A quote of £250 plus VAT had been received from RH Landscapes. It was agreed that this should be removed.

22. Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

Cllr Hawes and the clerk had attended the webinars regarding the free installation of EV charging points. The scheme was to install slow charging EV points on public car parks to enable homeowners who did not have off road parking to charge an electric vehicle. However, as there were only a small number of houses without off road parking it was found that the scheme would not be applicable.

23. Request from the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants to Create a Land Management Plan in the Cemetery and Churchyard

It was noted that this was an emotive subject. Cllr Robinson would contact the Wildlife Trust to discuss.

24. Results of the 20mph Consultation

The results had been received from the consultation and CCC would make these available to the public. There had been 58 responses and Cllr Hunt had congratulated the Parish Council on running a thorough consultation. An amendment to the scheme had been discussed by Cllr Hunt and Highways changing the Church Road end of the village so that the speed limit falls from 40mph to 30mph to 20mph at the bus stop. The Parish Council agreed with the change and would question why this could not also happen at the Stretham Road end of the village. The Parish Council would continue to push for Lower Road to reduce to 20mph.

25. St Andrews Admissions Criteria for September 2025

The Parish Council had been informed via a Facebook Post that St Andrews School was changing their admissions criteria from September 2025 and the change no longer prioritised school places for the children in the Parish. This would mean the children from the parish would no longer have a place at St Andrews due to the large amount of houses being built in Soham South. Investigations showed that there had been a flawed consultation. The Chair had contacted DEMAT and discussed the changes pointing out the reason why the places were prioritised. After a number of emails and conversations, DEMAT agreed to reverse the decision for September 2025 and would consult again in October 2024. The Parish Council would again object to the changes.

26. Financial Matters

26.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages May 2024	£509.60
HMRC PAYE	PAYE May 2024	£127.40
British Gas	Electric for changing rooms 12.4.24-11.5.24	£19.74
British Gas	Electric for Changing Rooms 12.3.24-12.4.24	£21.22
ROSPA Playsafety Ltd	Annual Audit	£206.40
SSE	Electric for streetlights March 2024	£52.01
SSE	Supply credit note	£80.00
Wicken Mission Hall	Rent for January, February, March 2024	£90.00
DJ Humphries	Tree Walkover Survey	£375.00
G Rogers	Ely Print Centre Leaflet printing for 20moh consultation	£63.00
SafetySigns4Less/R James	Plastic signs for Pond Green Play Park	£58.12
SafetySigns4Less/R James	Plastic No Dogs Allowed signs	£27.60

26.2 Monthly Finance update

The monthly finance report showed the Parish Council was in a stable position.

26.3 Bank Reconciliation to 29 April 2024

The bank statements and reconciliation reports had been circulated. These were noted.

27. Items for Information

Cllr Houghton advised that the benches in the village would benefit from being cleaned and treated. It was agreed the Cllr Houghton should contact a parishioner to ask for his assistance.

The clerk advised that there was a waiting list for allotments and some allotments were not kept in a clean and proper state. It was agreed that the clerk would look at the allotment agreement to see if notice to vacate could be served on allotment holders with substantially unused or uncultivated allotments

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Houghton for her long service in the role of Chair and the contribution she made to the parish whilst holding the role.