

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 11 JUNE 2024
WICKEN MISSION HALL

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):
B Pepper (Chair), L Houghton , R Barnes, M Hawes, P Rash, S Hill, C Robinson and District Councillor Vellacott, County Councillor Hunt and 1 parishioner.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr S Wilson (personal) and Cllr J Rogers (personal).

2. 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.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. 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.

The clerk had received a letter from a parishioner requesting that the verges along Hawes Lane and from Hawes Lane to 10 Stretham Road were not cut until September.

The agenda was taken out of order to allow for the reports from the County and District Councillors.

7. County and District Councillors Reports

Cllr Vellacott reported on the following:

- The applications for the Land East to 38A Chapel Lane had been refused.
- ECDC Annual meeting – motion passed ‘Debate not Hate’ following a campaign to stop abuse of local councillors.
- ECDC will be reviewing local play parks to ensure accessibility for all.
- The Combined Authority had an underspend of £21m revenue. Cllr Vellacott will be pushing the mayor on how he intends to deliver rural transport.

Waste Service decision is due in October 2024.

- Weekly food waste collection service
- 120L black wheelie bin for every household but residents can request a larger bin if needed. These will be collected every other week.
- Blue and green bins to remain the same.

‘Ask for Ani’ leaflets will be delivered to every house. This is a scheme to help victims of domestic abuse.

Cllr Hunt reported on the following:

- Mayor precept had been increased by 200% but the bus service from Littleport to Cambridge had been cut from 3 buses per hour to 1 bus per hour. This had been increased to 2 buses following a campaign by the Leader of ECDC.
- Congratulations for a well-run consultation for the 20mph
- Continuing to fight for changes to Station Road Haddenham to stop the rat run. This could also help ease traffic in Wicken.
- Central government had reviewed all councils in the country. CCC was 224th and ECDC equal 2nd.
- Continued to campaign for the duelling of the A10.

Cllrs Vellacott and Hunt left the meeting at 8.10pm

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14 May 2024

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

5. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 14 May 2024

5.1 Mission Hall BT manhole –This was ongoing.

5.2 The memorial stability testing had taken place – the clerk was starting to contact families. This would be an ongoing project.

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

5.4 Repair of Village Sign –This was ongoing.

5.5 Repair of the Church Wall – A faculty was not required but in accordance with List B regulations, written permission from the Archdeacon was required. The request had been submitted.

5.6 Hawes Lane culvert – Cllr Pepper would investigate.

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

5.8 Lower Road Ditch –The clerk had written to the landowners explaining about Riparian responsibility of ditches.

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

5.10 Kings Coronation Oak plaque – The clerk had found a suitable plaque for £89. Cllrs Hall and Hawes would enquire about cheaper ones.

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

5.12 Willow tree bough removal – The clerk had asked RH Landscapes to remove the bough.

5.13 Electric Vehicle Charging Points – The National Trust were installing EV points at some of their properties but Wicken Fen had not been included in the first phase of the project.

5.14 20mph – A further request had been submitted to Highways that Lower Road was included in the 20mph area but had again been declined. It had been agreed that Church Road would have a slower reduction from 40mph to 30mph reaching 20mph at the bus stop. This was not possible along Stretham Road due to the distance required between each zone. Stretham Road would therefore go from 40mph to 20mph.

5.16 Cleaning of Parish Benches – The Parish Council thanked RG for cleaning the metal/wooden benches. These would now need treating.

6. Planning Matters

6.1 Change of use from Use Class B8 to C3 residential including the removal of storage containers, erection of four detached dwellings, along with associated works including closing and relocating the existing access. Land North West of Stretham Road, Wicken. Ref 23/00894/FUL. Appeal reference APP/V0510/W/24/3341431

The Parish Council comments from the original application would be forwarded to the planning inspectorate. The Parish Council would also add the following:

Wicken Parish Council would like to point out that the Local Plan of 2015 stated for housing in Wicken:

'Outside the development envelope, housing will not normally be permitted – unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as essential dwellings for rural workers, or affordable housing. Housing schemes outside the development envelope will be assessed against Policy GROWTH 2 and other Local Plan policies as appropriate.' These houses were not low cost houses.

- The building area is beyond the brown field site.
- The village does not have the infrastructure for further houses.
- The sewage system is struggling with raw sewage regularly overflowing from man hole covers when it rains.
- Wicken only has one bus per week which means homeowners would need cars (please see bullet point in original comments) and the village does not have a school or a shop.

6.2 T1 Aesculus Hippocastanum - Crown raise to 3m from ground level, remove any deadwood and reduce crown by up to 3m in height and lateral spread T2 Taxus baccata - Crown raise to 3m above public footpath, reduce to give 2m clearance from power lines and reduce overall crown by up to 1.5m As per clients request. 3 Church Road, Wicken. Ref 24/00532/TRE

The Parish Council supports the application but would like to ensure that if issues are found during the tree work, these are reported back to the Tree Officer for further investigation and solutions instead of the tree being felled immediately.

6.3 Updates on Planning Application Approve/Refused by ECDC

Refused

4 terraced one-bedroom homes with off-street parking and associated landscape. Site to the East of 38A Chapel Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/00288/FUL

8. Fixed Assets

The fixed assets were reviewed and agreed.

9. Insurance Renewal

The insurance renewal was due in July. This was currently on the third year of a 3 year contract. The cost for the annual insurance was £1857.76.

10. Insurance Claim for the Repair to the Equipment on Pond Green Play Area and Signage

The signs for the Pond Green Play Area had been installed. The vandalism had to be reported to the police before the insurance claim could progress. The insurance claim had been submitted and the clerk was awaiting the approval of the claim before the new equipment was ordered.

11. Review and Approval of the Standing Orders

The standing orders were unchanged. These were reviewed and approved.

12. Review and Approval of the Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations had been updated by NALC. The clerk and Cllr Houghton would review and update in line with Wicken Parish Council financial limits and this would be on the July agenda for approval.

13. Parish Grass Cutting Regime

The Parish Council had undertaken No Mow May but had received a large number of complaints from parishioners. The warm and wet weather had made the grass grow quicker than normal and the Parish Council had made the decision to cut the greens in the last week of May. The normal cutting schedule would resume. The Parish Council discussed in great detail both sides of the argument of allowing the grass to grow long and the following was agreed:

Verges would continue to be part of No Mow May in the future. However, the Parish Council was paid by CCC to cut the verges and there was therefore an obligation to cut them.

Cllrs Hill and Robinson would create a plan to have designated areas in the village where the grass was allowed to grow longer, areas where the grass would not be cut below 2 inches to allow for clover etc. to grow and areas where the grass was cut short. The plan would be discussed at the July meeting and the parish would be consulted.

RH Landscapes had asked whether an additional cut was needed before the fete. It was agreed that an extra cut should take place on the greens and the cuttings collected.

14. Request from Upware Residents Association to Cut the Grass on the Open Space in Line with the Wicken Regime

It was agreed that the number of cut on the Upware Open Space should be increased to two per month.

15. Changing Rooms Project

- **Ratification of email approval for stage 1 fee and approval for stage two and three**

Dan Hardingham from George Laurel had detailed the 3 stages from drawing up designs for the changing rooms through to the planning application.

- Stage 1 £300 plus VAT
- Stage 2 £600 plus VAT
- Stage 3 £300 plus VAT

Acceptance of the fees was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Hawes. All were in favour.

16. Neighbourhood Plan

A Councillor from Reach Parish Council would attend the July meeting and present on the process and timeline for a Neighbourhood Plan.

17. Allotments

- Turning Circle
- Review of the Contract

It was agreed that the Allotment Committee should meet at the allotments and report back to the Parish Council at the July meeting.

18. St Andrews Primary School Admissions

The School Adjudicator had contacted DEMAT regarding the September 2025 admissions for St Andrews. This would be reported to the Parish Council when more was known.

19. Financial Matters

19.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages June 2024	£509.60
HMRC PAYE	PAYE June 2024	£127.40
British Gas	Electric for changing rooms 8.10.23 to 8.6.24 £160.22. Credit note 8.10.23 to 8.6.24 £154.49	£5.73
Wave	Water 3.3.24 - 2.6.24 Rec	£28.55
Wave	Water 3.3.24 - 2.6.24 Cemetery	£17.24
Wave	Water 3.3.24 – 2.6.24 Butts Lane allotment	£23.02
SSE	Streetlight electric 1.4.24 – 30.4.24	£50.36
CAPALC	Planning webinar – Bill Pepper	£90.00
Elizabeth Houghton	Chairmans expenses 2023/24	£150.00
RH Landscapes	Grass cutting May and trimming of branches Maids Head drive tree	£690.00
A & M Windows	Bus shelter cleaning	£50.00
Zurich Municipal	Insurance 12/7/24-11/7/24	£1857.76
Roland Fletcher	Footpath cutting	£892.80

19.2 Monthly Finance update

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

19.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 May 2024

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

19.4 Annual Expense Claim for the Chair for 2023.24

The annual payment of £150 for Chairmans expenses was approved.

19.5 Recharge of Around and About Costs to the Horticultural Show

The printing of the schedule and entry form for the Horticultural Show had created extra costs for the printing of the Around and About. There had been an error with the invoice from Burwell Print Centre and therefore this would be added to the July agenda.

20. Items for Information

A number of hedges were starting to encroach on the paths. The clerk would issue letters where appropriate.

Cllr Houghton advised that Peter Fuller who had sat on Wicken Parish Council from 1963 to 2019 had passed away. Peter Fuller had made a phenomenal contribution to the parish and would be greatly missed.

The meeting closed at 9.27pm

Minutes accepted as a true and correct copy.....