

**WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD
AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 13 FEBRUARY 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, P Rash, C Robinson, S Hill and District Councillor I Bovingdon and 3 members of the public. Louisa Wood and Dr Brixey from Mereside Medical Centre and Matthew Hudson 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 Cllr S Wilson (illness), Cllr M Hawes (personal), District Councillor Vellacott and County Councillor Bill Hunt.

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 resident of 8 Back Lane introduced himself ahead of agenda item 8.5.

4. Presentation by Louisa Wood COO of Mereside Medical Centre regarding the planning application for the new Staploe Medical Centre in Soham.

Information Boards had been on display prior to the Parish Council meeting and a number of village residents had attended. A Planning application had been submitted by Mereside Medical for the new medical centre at Soham which would be suitable for 8 to 10 years with room for expansion when required. The land would be provided by This Land but was reliant on the approval of the Eastern Gateway housing scheme. Wicken Parish Council recognised the need for improved facilities and offered full backing and agreed to be a consultee. It was noted that the Parish Council had also supported the application for a doctor's surgery at Stretham. The clerk would add a section in the Around and About informing residents that hard copies of the information and survey could be found in the Mission Hall.

Louisa Wood, Dr Brixey and Cllr Bovingdon left the meeting at 7.55pm

The agenda would be taken in a different order due to the length of time the meeting would take.

Draft minutes not yet accepted

5. Agenda Item 15 – 125th Anniversary of Wicken Fen

Matthew Hudson from the National Trust presented the event plans for the 125th Anniversary which was due to take place on the first weekend of May 2024. The National Trust was applying for larger licenced areas and extended licencing hours to cover both extended opening hours and a larger area. This was to initially allow for the celebrations weekend and to run through the school holidays. However, the licence application was for a permanent licence. The plans included a Tuk Tuk serving coffee etc. to be placed in the vicinity of the car park and would open at 8am to serve coffee etc. It also included an area for afternoon tea and food events in the evening for example a pizza van serving until 8pm. The Parish Council had concerns regarding parking and it was explained that the longer opening hours would hopefully mean that people were arriving over a longer period which would help with parking. There were also concerns regarding antisocial behaviour and the impact on the Maids Head due to the food vans. This would be followed up by Cllr Houghton with the National Trust.

Cllr Rash asked if the National Trust was supporting the need for buses in the village. Matthew Hudson confirmed it was something that they were actively pursuing.

Matthew Hudson left the meeting at 8.30pm

6. Agenda Item 5. Upware Open Space

The URA gave an update on the Open Space and residents survey regarding the use of the Open Space. The results showed that residents would like a wildflower meadow, additional trees. Daffodils, herb patches, bee mound and nesting boxes. The benches had been installed and a working group had cleared weeds etc. A 12-month action plan would be drawn up by the URA The Parish Council thanked the URA for their work on the Open Space.

The URA representative left at 8.45pm

8.5 Change of use from 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

The Parish Council would like a condition applied that this should not be made into a separate dwelling and any change of use to residential must go through a planning application.

A resident left at 8.55pm

6. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9 January 2024

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

7. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 9 January 2024

7.1 Mission Hall BT manhole –Documents for the wayleave application had been submitted.

7.2 Parking on the Village Greens – The Pond Green was starting to get eroded. The clerk would obtain quotes for wooden posts.

Draft minutes not yet accepted

7.3 Bark chippings – Cllr Pepper would arrange for the chippings to be spread around the tree base.

7.4 Hedge Adjacent to Wicken Mission Hall Car Park – A meeting was scheduled for 18 February 2024

7.5 The memorial stability testing had been postponed due to the weather. This would take place 16 March 2024

7.6 Successful Application for 20mph Zones and Proposed Designs – CCC would be arranging a public consultation which would be advertised.

7.7 Speedwatch Session in Upware – Cllr Pepper would obtain a Speedwatch location code for Upware and complete a session in February/March 2024.

7.8 Assets of Community Value for the Maid’s Head – ECDC had requested further information which would be submitted.

7.9 Allotment access road and Maltings footpath– plainings would be used to repair the access road and also on the turning point and the uneven areas on the Maltings footpath.

7.10 Electric Charging Point – Cllr Pepper had researched and found that the Mission Hall had single phase electric which meant that it would take 6.5 hours to charge a battery. This would not be viable but would be reviewed in 12 months.

7.11 Solar Panels in the Conservation Area – ECDC had confirmed that planning permission was not required for solar panels in a conservation area.

7.12 Anglian Water – The clerk had escalated concerns regarding wastewater in Lower Road to Anglian Water and this was being investigated by them. There were also the same issues down Chapel Lane.

7.13 Verge along Chapel Lane – The clerk had contacted the developers of Augustine Place and they had built the side of the verge up and would do so if it was damaged again. The clerk had written to Highways regarding the possibility of reflector bollards where the verge was narrow.

7.14 Repair of Village Sign – The clerk had contacted Jerry Woodroffe who had quoted £365 to remove the bricks, repair the base of the oak post and rebuild the base. This was agreed. The Parish Council would like the sign repainted at the same time.

8. Planning Matters

8.1 Construction of single storey rear extension and two storey front extension. 8 The Crescent, Wicken, Ely, Cambs CB7 5XN. Ref 24/00005/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections.

Draft minutes not yet accepted

8.2 Dropped kerb on public highway to provide parking to existing parking area. 59 Church Road, Wicken. Ref 23/01306/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections.

8.3 To Vary Conditions 1 (Approved Plans) of previously approved 22/00359/FUL dated 28 September 2022 for proposed two storey rear extension to dwelling and reconstruction of existing barn. The Vicarage, 5 Church Road, Wicken. Ref 24/00008/VAR

The Parish Council had no objections.

8.4 T1 Cedar - Fell as has outgrown the space available and damaging the driveway. T2 Cedar - Fell as has outgrown the space available and within falling distance of listed property. T3, T4, T5 Conifers - Reduce height by 50% and trim. 3 Pond Green Wicken Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 5XX. Ref 24/00047/TRE

The Parish Council was reluctant to see T1 and T2 removed as these were significant trees in a conservation area and would like alternative measures to be considered.

The Parish Council agreed the work on the conifer trees.

8.6 Updates on Planning Application Approve/Refused by ECDC

Approved

Demolition of existing cottage and construction of 2 detached dwellings. 16 Chapel Lane, Wicken. 23/0132/FUL

9. County and District Councillor Reports

District Councillor Vellacott had submitted the following report:

- CCC are costing to clear the blocked culvert adjacent 16 Upware.
- Staploe Medical Centre have put in a planning application for a new centre as part of the Eastern Gateway project. I am in support of a new medical centre.
- East Cambs District Council has underwritten funds for two further youth events in the district this year. It also gave grants for Service Agreements with Citizens' Advice West Suffolk and the Community Safety Partnership
- The District Council will meet on 20th February to debate its budget. The Council intends to freeze its portion of Council Tax for the 11th year running and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is prudent. ECDC will also debate the Mepal Bereavement Centre, requests from ECDC Trading Companies and review our Constitution.
- Waste service review is ongoing. ECDC have included in the budget provision for black bins and still await advice from the Government about how to proceed with a food waste collection.
- ECDC has published its Annual Governance Statement online.
- ECDC has part funded a 3G Sports Pitch at Soham Village College which will be available for community use. Active travel via the new cycle path is encouraged for Wicken residents also.

10. Neighbourhood Plan

Cllrs Barnes, Hill, Pepper and the clerk would attend the CAPALC Neighbourhood Plan training on 26 February 2024.

11. Refurbishment of the Changing Rooms

Cllr Pepper had met with Dan Hardingham and representatives of the football club. He would arrange to meet with the Recreation Committee representatives to discuss the Beer Festival needs.

12. Repair of the Church Wall

The clerk had obtained three quotes for the church wall. The quotes were to remove around 4 meters of the wall, put in foundations and rebuild the wall to match the existing bricks using lime mortar. The quotes received were:

Johnson Construction	£4940 including VAT
JD Woodroffe	£4100 with the Parish Council sourcing the materials
Ethan Baldwin	£9400

The Parish Council discussed the quotes between Johnson Construction and JD Woodroffe, and it was agreed that JD Woodroffe should be awarded the contract due to his existing work with the Diocese on ecclesiastical buildings. This was proposed by Cllr Rash and seconded by Cllr Pepper. All were in favour.

13. Church Yard Paths

There were still some issues with the loose gravel on paths. Some gravel had been removed on the section from the car park to the porch door and sand added. This would be monitored.

14. Appointment of Internal Auditor

David Leonard had applied for the role of internal auditor and had meet with Cllrs Houghton and Rogers and the clerk. The Parish Council was in favour of the appointment.

15. 125th Anniversary of Wicken Fen

Cllr Houghton would seek clarity on the following:

- Terms of the application
- Contingency plans for parking
- Clarity around the alcohol licence

The clerk would contact ECDC regarding the licence.

Draft minutes not yet accepted

16. Mission Hall Green Trees

Cllr Robinson and the clerk had met with the Tree Officer from ECDC to discuss the trees on the Mission Hall. Part of the Field maple tree had broken off during one of the storms which had left the tree unstable. The following work was suggested by the Tree Officer and RH Landscapes had quoted for the work:

16.1 Field Mapel Tree – reduction of 3-4 meters

Quote of £400 plus VAT

16.2 Malus ‘Rudolph’ tree – reduction of 2 meters

Quote of £200 plus VAT.

16.3 Lime tree – removal of dead wood

Quote of £225 plus VAT

16.4 Crown lift of Lime tree adjacent to main road

The height of the lower branches had been raised as a concern at the coffee morning by a resident as the branches were too low to walk under when in full leaf. The quote for the crown lift was £100 plus VAT.

All tree works were agreed unanimously.

17. Lower Road Ditch

The Lower Road ditch at Afterways was overflowing on to the road and the water was not escaping. Cllrs Rash and Pepper would investigate.

18. Parish Council Social Media

This would be on the March agenda.

19. Financial Matters

19.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages February 2024	£509.60
HMRC PAYE	PAYE February 2024	£127.40
RH Landscapes	Removal of brambles on Upware Open Space	£300.00
RH Landscapes	Cutting of the cemetery hedge	£690.00
RH Landscapes	Flailing of the Recreation Ground hedge	£450.00
RH Landscapes	Call out to clear large broken stem	£420.00
A & M Window Cleaning	Cleaning of bus shelter	£50.00
British Gas	Electric for changing rooms 12/12/23-13/1/24	£23.73
British Gas	Electric for changing rooms 13/11/23-12//12/23	£21.42

19.2 Monthly Finance update

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

Draft minutes not yet accepted

19.3 Bank Reconciliation to January 2024

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

20. Policies

20.1 Complaints Policy

20.2 Grievance Policy

20.3 Health and Safety Policy

20.4 Recruitment Policy and Procedure

Approval of the policies en bloc was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Robinson, all were in favour.

21. Items for Information

Cllr Rash also raised a concern regarding flooding at the bottom of Hawes Lane due to the culvert not working. The clerk would contact Highways.

Cllr Rash also raised the need for kerbing along Hawes Lane. This had been requested when the original road plans had been submitted by the developer but had not been included as part of the planning agreement.

Cllr Hill had attended the new councillor training and advised that the Parish Council needed to have its own website. The current website was owned by the Parish Council as they pay for the domain etc. but the clerk would look to make this clearer on the website.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 11pm