

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026
WICKEN MISSION HALL

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):
Cllrs R Barnes, A Cogan, M Hawes, S Hill, L Houghton, B Pepper, P Rash. C Robinson, J Rogers,
County Councillor Hawker-Dawson and 2 residents.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from District Councillor Lucius Vellacott.

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 landlord of the Maids Head advised the Parish Council of his vision for the area of Green at the front of the pub. This would include the siting of possibly 3 tables in the style of Hungarian Huts and picnic tables as well as hanging baskets and potted plants.

4. Picnic Benches on the Maids Head Green

The Parish Council discussed the ideas with the landlord and asked that a plan was put in writing with details of the vision and drawings/photos of the Hungarian Huts. Cllr Houghton advised that as the Maids Head was a listed building and was in a conservation area, planning permission may be needed and suggested that the landlord investigated this with ECDC. This would be on the February agenda. The Chair congratulated the landlord of the Maids Head on the transformation they had made to the Maids Head in a relatively short time.

Two parishioners left the meeting at 7.55pm

5. County and District Councillor Reports

County Councillor Hawker-Dawson advised the following:

- The successful stopping of the change in admission criteria which had been consulted on by DEMAT
- The Wicken to Soham cycle path was now open although additional work was required. The Parish Council raised the concern around the bridleway surface of the section of cycle path at the bottom of Hall Farm road. Cllr Hawker-Dawson would raise the concern with the project lead at CCC.
- CCC were in the process of budget setting with a meeting on 10 February 2026.
- Gritting on the main road would continue. Cllr Rash raised the concern that the gritting lorries were seen doing 33mph in the 20mph. Cllr Hawker-Dawson would take this further.

- Cllr Rash asked about reason why the signs were saying that the road was closed from the Downfields roundabout when there was only a small closure in Stretham which had alternate routes in the village. Cllr Hawker-Dawson was already investigating this.
- Cllr Robinson raised the concern of the state of the paths along Stretham Road. The clerk advised that these had been reported many times but no action had taken place. Cllr Hawker-Dawson would follow this up.
- The state of the Lower Road between Hawes Lane and Way Lane was discussed. Cllr Pepper would provide photographs of the issues.
- Cllr Pepper raised the concern with the land behind 28 Stretham Road and the access that had been created on to Lower Road by the landowner. Although this was being pursued by ECDC planning enforcement team Cllr Hawker-Dawson would look into the access onto Lower Road

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Hawker-Dawson for his support with the admissions for St Andrews.

Cllr Hawker-Dawson left the meeting at 8.20pm

District Councillor Vellacott had submitted a written report this included:

- Information on the proposed change to the 117 route which would replace the service to Tiger on Demand.
- The central government planning policy supported battery storage. District Councillor Vellacott would continue to fight the application for the BESS on the outskirts of the Parish as there were still concerns with biodiversity, access and fire risk and noise issues for Wicken residents. It was expected that the application would be heard at the ECDC Planning Committee in February/March.
- Back Lane surface would be fixed following an injury to a resident.
- ECDC could demonstrate a 6.17 year supply for housing land.

6. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9 December 2025

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

7. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 9 December 2025

7.1 Lode Lane 20mph Signs –This was ongoing.

7.2 Wicken Windmill – The Parish Council congratulated the trustees of Wicken Windmill for winning the title of the busiest working windmill in the country in the annual Windmill Whirloff.

7.3 War Memorial – Cllr Pepper had been in contact with the London Lime Company. This would be reviewed again in the Spring when the war memorial had dried.

7.4 Changing Rooms Project – The planning permission had been approved. This was now at tendering stage but there had been a considerable delay with distribution if the tender to the named builders. Cllr Pepper would talk to the architects and would apply pressure for resolution or the Parish Council would be forced to go elsewhere to ensure continued progress with the project. This would be on the February agenda.

7.5 Painting of the Cemetery Railings –The clerk or chair would be meeting with Community Payback team in January.

- 7.6** Land rear of 28 Stretham Road – this was ongoing.
- 7.7** Erosion of the bank on the lode at the Maltings – the clerk had contacted the EA.
- 7.8** Upware hedge – this was ongoing.
- 7.9** Wicken to Soham cycle path – The cycle path opened in December 2025 although additional work is needed to some areas when the weather improves. There was concern regarding the surface of the bridleway section at the bottom of the road from Hall Farm. This would be raised with Highways by Cllr Hawker-Dawson.
- 7.10** URA 20mph Consultation – This had been circulated to all households in Upware. The closing date had been set for 31 January 2026. This would be on the February agenda.
- 7.11** Allotments – The two vacant allotments had now been allocated. The clerk would be contacting the allotment holders who were not cultivating their allotments.
- 7.12** Match Funding for the Neighbourhood Plan – The application for £5k match funding had been submitted to ECDC with the assistance of Places4People.
- 7.13** Christmas tree lights – a set of lights had been ordered but the product was disappointing. Further thought would be put into this before December.
- 7.14** Tree works in the village – The crown lift on the 2 trees on the Mission Hall Green had taken place and RH Landscapes would clear the brambles and ditch on the Rec when the weather improved. The clerk was meeting with the tree specialist and the report would be on the February agenda. A resident had requested that the hedge on the Rec was not cut as low as usual. This was cut low for security reasons, but it was agreed that the hedge would be allowed to widen on the field side.

8. Planning Matters

8.1 Two storey side extension to existing bungalow. Drogheda, Upware CB7 5YQ. Ref 25/01287/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections.

8.2 Minor external works, installation of solar panels, external porch and addition of bin and bike stores. 5 Chapel Lane, Wicken CB7 5XZ. Ref 25/01336/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections.

8.3 Update on Planning Applications Approved/Refused by ECDC

There were no applications approved or refused since the last meeting.

9. St Andrew's Primary School Admissions

DEMAT had completed the consultation and had agreed not to change the admissions criteria which would mean that children living in Wicken, Upware and Padney still had priority over the children living in Soham. DEMAT had noted the CCC objections to the changes which they stated would prejudice Wicken Parish children from 2028, as well as incur increased school transport costs.

The Parish Council would like to thank Charlotte Cane MP, County Councillor Hawker-Dawson and District Councillor Vellacott for their support in objecting to the proposed changes.

10. Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had met and agreed the zones for the character appraisal which would be completed by the Working Party. Places4People would arrange the call for sites which would be in the next edition of the Around and About. The wording for the call for sites would be on the February agenda.

11. Review of the Village and Climate Plan

The updates from 2025 were agreed. The plan would be put on the website. It was agreed that the annual village clean up would be held in the Spring.

12. Review of the Projects Completed in 2025

The following projects had been completed above the normal day to day running:

- Neighbourhood Plan Survey
- Installation of grids on the church footpaths
- Clearing of the Recreation Ground Pond
- Cross Green parking posts
- Planting Scheme agreed
- Ownership of Upware Defib
- Successful LHI bid for Redit Lane
- Painting of the village benches
- Successful opposition of the proposed changes to the admissions criteria for St Andrews
- Opening of the cycle path
- Planting of daffodil bulbs around the village

13. IT Policy

The new IT policy was reviewed and the need for the Parish Council to own the computer the clerk used was raised as well as a number of amendments to the policy. This would be on the February agenda and the IT policy reviewed once the decision had been made.

14. Renewal of the Membership to the Society of Local Council Clerks

The Parish Council had paid this subscription for a number of years. The SLCC provided regular updates and courses amongst a number of other services. Renewal of the membership was proposed by Cllr Robinson and seconded by Cllr Barnes. All were in favour.

15. Request for a Christmas Celebration Event 2026

A request had been received from a parishioner for the Parish Council to support a village Christmas Carol event around a Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. This would be organised by the resident who was making the suggestion. The Parish Council agreed to support the event but suggested it was not held on Christmas Eve as this could clash with the Live Nativity at the church. The Parish Council suggested the resident discussed this with the church and chapel to arrange a day when other events were not taking place.

16. Financial Matters

16.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages January 2026	£703.08
HMRC	Employers PAYE	£179.60
Nest Pension	Employees Contribution	£15.11
Nest Pension	Employers Contribution	£11.33
HMRC NI	Employers NI for January 2026	£72.12
RH Landscapes	Cemetery Hedge cutting	£1020.00
Wicken Mission Hall	October, November, December rent	£90.00
SSE*	23 September to 30 November 2025	£161.92
SSE	1 December to 31 December 2025	£76.58
British Gas	changing rooms electric	£30.98

*SSE had cancelled the direct debit during the change of contract to half hourly. Payments had been made by debit card and a direct debit form submitted for future payments.

21.2 Monthly Finance update

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

21.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 December 2025

This had been circulated and noted.

22. Items for Information

Cllr Hawes advised that the Beer Festival Committee would like permission to allow dogs on the Recreation Ground for the day of beer festival. This would be on the February agenda.

Cllr Houghton advised that she had been helping a parishioner complete an application form for an Almshouse and had found the application information difficult to obtain and was not accessible for all. Cllr Cogan would take this back to the Mary Hatch Almshouses Trustees.

The Parish Council thanked Cllr Pepper for repairing the posts on Cross Green. The Parish Council had been monitoring the need for an additional post and following parking on the green at the weekend it was felt that this was necessary.

Cllr Houghton raised the need for the hedge at the Old Forge to be cut back as the North Street sign was not visible and the hedge is severely overgrown. The clerk would contact the owners.

The Parish Council was pleased to note that the Methodist Chapel had been successful in obtaining a grant to repair a section of the roof.

There were no further business and the meeting closed at 10.09pm

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