

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2025
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, L Houghton, B Pepper, C Robinson, J Rogers, District Councillor Vellacott and 4 residents.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs P Rash and S Hill and County Councillor Hawker-Dawson

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.

Cllr Barnes declared an interest in agenda item 15.

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.

There was no public participation.

4. Wicken Windmill Presentation

Dave Pearce presented the history, the restoration and the future of Wicken Corn Mill. The presentation included the importance of wind for the mill in relation to future development in Wicken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Dave Pearce and 3 residents left the meeting at 8.10pm

5. County and District Councillor Reports

County Councillor Hawker-Dawson had provided a written report. This included information on:

- Local Government Reorganisation
- Integrated care system
- Schools' procurements
- Holiday activities and food programme
- Bird flu
- Progress towards Net Zero Cambridgeshire
- Highways and transport
- Surgery on the second Tuesday of each month 10.30am to 12noon at St James' Church Stretham

District Councillor Vellacott had submitted a written report and also reported on the following:

Tiger bus will continue. The mayor will be writing to small operators about the serviced bus route. ECDC has agreed a £50k grant scheme for match funding for Neighbourhood Plans. Grants would be available up to £5k.

BESS – this had been called in to Planning Committee in April 2025. There had been 5 extensions to the deadline due to developers rectifying plans to objections. It was now expected that it would go to committee in February or March 2026.

There were still issues with the Upware culvert. The IDB was looking into who was responsible for the culvert.

St Andrews Admissions Consultation – a letter would be written to DEMAT opposing the change in criteria.

The Section 106 money in relation to the Eastern Gateway was close to signing which would ensure the new doctor's surgery would go ahead.

ECDC has agreed 3 asset transfers in Littleport, and discussions were soon to take place about the transfer of assets in Soham. This was to protect the assets for the future.

Options A, B, D and E has been submitted for the LGR with ECDC supporting Option B.

The Chair thanked District Councillor Vellacott for his hard work and dedication to Wicken Parish.

District Cllr Vellacott left the meeting at 8.25pm

6. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 11 November 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 11 November 2025

7.1 Lode Lane 20mph Signs – A possible location had been found, and the clerk would talk to Highways regarding 20mph signs.

There had been additional traffic through the village recently due to a diversion from the A14. The official diversion route was Ely but the A1123 was being used. Wilburton would also now have a 20mph speed limit which would hopefully have a positive effect on cars using the local roads as a rat run.

7.2 NLOW small pond on the Recreation Ground – Cllr Hill and Cllr Robinson had completed work on clearing the pond on the Recreation Ground. The Parish Council thanked them and Adam Hill for their work.

7.3 War Memorial – this was ongoing.

7.4 Changing Rooms Project – The planning permission had been approved. This was now at tendering stage. The Parish Council were disappointed to note the delay being experienced in getting the tenders written.

7.5 Painting of the Cemetery Railings – Cllr Pepper would meet with James Peterson to discuss this further. The clerk had contacted Community Payback to see if the project could be completed by the scheme.

7.6 Land rear of 28 Stretham Road – this was ongoing.

7.7 Erosion of the bank on the lode at the Malltings – the clerk would contact the EA.

7.8 Upware hedge – the clerk had contacted the owner of the hedge.

7.9 Wicken to Soham cycle path – Soham Town Council were working with CCC to get a date for opening the cycle path.

8. Planning Matters

There were no applications this month.

8.1 Update on Planning Applications Approve/Refused by ECDC

Approved

- 2 detached 4-bedroom houses had been approved for the site east of 38A Chapel Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/01119/FUL
- Various conditions for the dwelling on plot 1, land south of 3 Old School Lane, Upware. Ref 25/01012/VAR
- Various tree work. Bakers Cottage, 36 High Street, Wicken. Ref 25/00943/TRE

9. St Andrew's Primary School Admissions

There was currently a consultation taking place by DEMAT for a change of criteria for admissions for St Andrew's Primary School which would move the Wicken parish children from criteria 3 to criteria 4 and redefine the catchment area effectively meaning that Wicken parish children would not receive a place at St Andrew's Primary School. This had successfully been challenged last year with the Schools Adjudicator agreeing that the consultation process had not been carried out correctly. The clerk had contacted Charlotte Cane MP and District Councillor Vellacott who had both supported the Parish Council last year. The clerk had also contacted County Councillor Hawker-Dawson for support. It was unanimously agreed that the Parish Council would oppose the change and would put a post on Facebook ensuring members of the parish were aware of the seriousness of the situation for future parish children.

10. URA Meeting Update and Request for 20mph Consultation

The clerk and Cllr Cogan had attended the URA meeting in November. The following was agreed:

- The Upware defibrillator funds would be transferred to the Parish Council and ringfenced for defib supplies.
- The Open Space would be cut from March to October and would not be part of No Mow May.
- The clerk would ask RH Landscapes to trim between the hedge and the fence and to keep the area clear.
- The Parish Council would carry out a consultation on a 20mph scheme in Upware.

11. Allotment Committee Meeting Minutes

The Allotment Committee had met on 7 December 2025 at Butts Lane allotments and the minutes circulated.

Butts Lane

There were concerns regarding the cultivation of one plot and 2 plots required the trees to be reduced. There were currently 2 allotments available, and this had been placed in the Around and About.

Afterway Allotments

Notice would be given to allotment holders who were not cultivating the land.

Fen Allotments

There was some erosion to one of the allotments due to cutting the corner when exiting the neighbouring driveway.

12. Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group had met with Places4People to discuss the next steps. This would be a call for sites with the assessment and final report being completed by Places4People. The cost of this would be £1560.00. A character appraisal of the village was also required, and this would be completed by the Working Group to save costs. The history of the village was also required. The call for sites was proposed by Cllr Hawes and seconded by Cllr Rogers. All were in favour.

13. Decision to Apply for the Neighbourhood Plan Match Funding from ECDC

ECDC had agreed to a match funding scheme for Neighbourhood Plans and were inviting Parish and Town Councils to apply for up to £5000 to part pay costs incurred in the writing of a Neighbourhood Plan. ECDC had put aside £50k for the scheme. It was agreed that Wicken Parish Council would apply for the match funding of £5k and asked the Clerk to write to apply on behalf of the Parish Council. All were in favour.

14. Decision Regarding Christmas Lights and Tree

Cllr Hill had researched a number of options for Christmas lights. It was agreed that the Parish Council should purchase solar lights to be wrapped around the trees in the High Street for Christmas 2026. The clerk would order one set of warm white lights as a trial.

Cllr Barnes left the meeting at 9.23pm

15. Permission to Allow the Pizza Van to Trade on the Mission Hall Car Park Twice Per Month

A request had been received for the Pizza Van to trade fortnightly on a Thursday on the Mission Hall car park. This was discussed and it was agreed that, as the Maids Head had just started serving food it should not be on a night that the pub was open. The Parish Council agreed that the pizza van could trade on a Monday or Tuesday subject to a trading licence with ECDC.

Cllr Barnes returned to the meeting at 9.30pm

16. Quotes for Tree Work and Decision When Work is to be Completed

The clerk had met with RH Landscapes to obtain quotes for some tree work in the village:

Ash tree, Lode Lane

The resident felt the ash tree was causing light issues for their property as three large branches reached across their property. The quote for removing three large boughs, pollarding and removing regrowth or removal of the tree was £675. It was agreed that the clerk should ask for further advice on the future of the tree as it was felt to be a good specimen.

Willow Trees, Pond Green

The three willow trees were contributing to the lack of water in the pond during the summer. A quote for pollarding the trees was £2000. It was agreed that the clerk should ask for further advice.

Crown Lifts, Mission Hall Green

The quote for the crown lift of 2 trees on the Mission Hall Green was £150. This was agreed.

Removal of Brambles from the Recreation Ground Ditch

Brambles had grown up in the ditch from the small pond along the back of the changing rooms and MUGA. The quote for this work was £650.00. This was agreed and the clerk would ask that RH Landscapes regularly cut closer to the ditch and behind the changing rooms to stop regrowth.

Flailing of the Recreation Ground Hedge and Cemetery Hedge

This was completed each year by RH Landscapes but was in addition to the annual grass cutting. It was agreed that this should take place again this year.

17. Review of the Fees and Charges and Burial Charges

These were reviewed and it was noted that the burial fees and a large number of the charges had been increase from April 2025. It was agreed that the newly purchased gazebos could be rented for £25 and there should be no charge to hire the folding tables.

18. Decision Regarding the Increase of Section 137 Money

Cllr Hawes proposed this should be increased to £300, this was seconded by Cllr Robinson. All were in favour.

19. Setting of the Precept 2026/27

The clerk had circulated the forecast precept for 2026/27. An additional £1500 was added to the forecast for maintenance of the pond.

The increase in precept to £40k was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Cogan. All were in favour.

20. Renewal of the Membership to Acre

This was proposed by Cllr Barnes and seconded by Cllr Cogan. All were in favour.

21. Financial Matters

21.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages December 2025	£703.28
HMRC	Employers PAYE	£179.40

Nest Pension	Employees Contribution	£15.11
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HMRC NI	Employers NI for December 2025	£72.12
RH Landscapes	November cuts	£504.00
Burwell Print Centre	December Around and About	£257.09
Cambridgeshire ACRE	Membership	£72.00
Community Heartbeat	Annual support cost	£162.00
Fasthosts	Domain renewal	£30.79
SSE	1/8/25-22/9/25	£200.43
Wave	Water 3/9/25-2/12/25 - Rec	£35.93
Wave	Water 3/9/25-2/12/25 – Cemetery	£18.29
Wave	Water 3/9/25-2/12/25 – Butts Lane	£20.81
British Gas	8/7/25-12/12/25 changing rooms electric	£25.65

21.2 Monthly Finance update

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

21.3 Bank Reconciliation to 29 November 2025

This had been circulated and noted.

21.4 Payment of Clerk's Expenses

The annual payment for the clerk's expenses was made.

22. Items for Information

Cllr Rogers raised the issue of people parking on the paths along North Street. The clerk would monitor and write when required.

Cllr Barnes raised the issue of overgrown hedges along Church Road. The clerk would write to the hedge owners.

Cllr Houghton advised that she had contacted Anglian Water when there were issues with the water pressure in the village and they had swapped to the second supply pipe on her request. Depending on where any outage is, it is important to remember there are two pipes for water service into the village for resilience in times of outage, something that Anglian Water needed reminding of.

Cllr Houghton raised the issue of parking on the village greens. The clerk would monitor and write when required.

Cllr Hawes advised that Highways would be maintaining the grips alongside Padney Road in January.

Cllr Pepper advised that the LHI bid for Redit Lane had been successful but would not be completed until 2028.

There were no further business and the meeting closed at 10.30pm