

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 14 APRIL 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, District Councillor Vellacott, District Council Bovingdon and 1 resident.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from 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 Houghton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 10.

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 that the Maids Head sign is being recreated with the original design. This will be installed in the coming weeks. The Parish Council asked that the brickwork for the new sign is not as high as the previous sign. Further updates on the work being completed at the Maids Head was provided.

The Parishioner left the meeting at 7.40pm

Cllr Houghton had declared an interest in Item 10 and asked to speak as a member of the public. Cllr Houghton asked the Parish Council to consider looking at the changing room project with a view to updating the current design.

4. County and District Councillor Reports

County Councillor Hawker-Dawson has provided a written report on the following:

- CCC Full Council meeting
- Local Government Reorganisation
- Children and Young People
- Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee
- Environmental and green investment
- Health
- Highways

The following questions would be raised with Cllr Hawker-Dawson:

- An update on the resurfacing of Back Lane
- What would be the impact on the Princess of Wales Hospital and local GPs following his report on the health services.

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

- Although the BESS has been approved by the Planning Committee conditions would be applied. There would not be any CIL or Section 106 money from the project
- The mayor was communicating with the government regarding the duelling of the A10. District Councillor Bovingdon added that the Eastern Powerhouse was also behind the project.

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 10 March 2026

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

6. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 10 March 2026

- 6.1** Highways signage – the 20mph signs for Lode Lane was ongoing.
- 6.2** 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.
- 6.3** Painting of the Cemetery Railings –The clerk would report the condition of the footpath from the cemetery to Hall Farm to Highways.
- 6.4** Land rear of 28 Stretham Road – this was ongoing.
- 6.5** Erosion of the bank on the lode at the Maltings – The Chair had emailed David Smith from the EA and awaited a reply.
- 6.6** Upware hedge –County Cllr Hawker-Dawson asked that this was reported via the normal Highways online system and he would then pick it up and chase.
- 6.7** Christmas tree lights – The clerk would be meeting with the Chair of Stretham Parish Council regarding their lights. Cllr Hill would also attend.
- 6.8** Tree Works – The tree works for the ash tree had been ordered.
- 6.9** Burglaries – A burglary had taken place in Padney and a number of items taken.

7. Planning Matters

7.1 Removal of leylandii cypress hedge running along the boundary and replacement with a 1.8m close board fencing – retrospective. 9 Back Lane, Wicken. Ref 26/00030/FUL

The Parish Council supported this application. The growth of the hedge had been an issue for a number of years and the removal and replacement with a fence was a great improvement in terms of Highways safety.

7.2 Update on Planning Applications Approved/Refused by ECDC

Approved

- Replacement of windows to the main house. High Fen Farm, 38 Stretham Road, Wicken. Ref 26/00192/LBC
- Two storey extension, demolition of existing outbuildings, driveway enhancement, erection of two outbuildings, 1.8m timber fence and addition of solar panels. Briarways 11 Pond Green, Wicken. Ref 25/01354/FUL

8. Update on the Battery Energy Storage System Following the Planning Committee Meeting at ECDC on 1 April 2026

The Chair and the Clerk had attended the committee meeting on 1 April 2026. Cllr Warner from Soham Town Council had also presented against the BESS. The Planning Committee had voted to approve the BESS with a vote of 7-4. The Parish Council thanked District Councillor Velacott for his support and calling the application in to the Planning Committee.

9. Neighbourhood Plan Update

The call for sites had taken place with a closing date of 30 April 2026. A meeting of the Working Group would be taking place on 11 April 2026 to arrange the character assessment.

10. Changing Rooms on the Recreation Ground – Submission of Tenders for Approval

Cllr Houghton left the meeting at 8.15pm

The original work had been estimated at £40k and an amount of £50k had been ringfenced. The following tenders had been received:

Company	Amount
M Turner	£121,643.00
DJ Houghton	£90,713.00
CJ Murfitts	£108,353.00
CLM	£81,000
CLM (revised quote)	£66,290 + groundwork (not yet submitted)

The Recreation Ground Committee had met on Monday 9 April 2026 to discuss the quotes. The Recreation Committee proposed that the project was revisited and the necessary work completed to make the building up to the current standards but without the full refurbishment. The Parish Council discussed the proposal and also discussed the new grants which had been made available by ECDC. As the project already had quotes for the work, Cllr Rash proposed that the Parish Council looked into obtaining a grant for the full project. The clerk would contact ECDC and enquire if the project would be eligible for the grant. Cllr Cogan asked for it to be minuted that he was not in favour of the full refurbishment. This would be on the May agenda.

Cllr Houghton joined the meeting at 8.45pm

11. Village Hall Parking

The Brass Band has flagged an issue with the parking at the village hall due to non-users parking and leaving their cars. Cllr Barnes advised this had been discussed by the Hall Committee and they would be taking action by placing messages on windscreens.

12. Maids Head Sign Replacement

The Parish Council were in favour of the sign being replaced.

13. Clerk's Additional Responsibilities

Over time the number of non-clerk related jobs completed by the clerk had increased to the point where it was taking between 10 and 15 hours a week to complete the role instead of the

10 hours which were paid. The additional roles included supervising the marquees, distribution of the Around and About, cemetery bins, health and safety checks on the play equipment and the Neighbourhood Plan amongst other jobs. The Parish Council redistributed the roles amongst a number of the councillors. The clerk would continue with the Neighbourhood Plan. It was agreed that additional keys were required for the mortuary chapel.

14. Consideration of the Position of Village Handyperson

This was discussed in full but the proposal for the role was withdrawn.

15. Battery Energy Storage System Update

This had been placed on the agenda twice in error.

16. Financial Matters

16.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages April 2026	£703.28
HMRC	Employers PAYE	£179.40
Nest Pension	Employees Contribution	£15.11
Nest Pension	Employers Contribution	£11.33
HMRC NI	Employers NI for April 2026	£72.12
RH Landscapes	Grass cutting March 2026	£520.13
SSE	1.3.26-31.3.26	£69.45
Wicken Mission Hall	Rent January, March, April	£90.00
CCC	Half year rent for Allotments	£1068.00
PWLB	Loan repayment	£2640.77

16.2 Monthly Finance update

The monthly finance report showed the Parish Council was in a stable position. It was agreed that the unspent money from 2025/26 should be ringfenced for the Neighbourhood Plan and bus shelter repairs as well as allocated to the budgets where it was unspent in 2025/26 for example tree work which is due to take place in the coming weeks.

16.3 Bank Reconciliation to 31 March 2026

This had been circulated and noted. It was noted that the accounts and audit had been completed by the clerk and were with the internal auditor. This would be on the May agenda.

16.4 Request for a Donation from Ely Food Bank

A request for a donation to Ely Food Bank had been received. There had been a large increase in the use of the Food Bank by parish residents and it was agreed that a donation of £150 should be made.

14. Items for Information

Cllr Houghton advised the lack of white lines on the junction of Drury Lane and Butts Lane had been reported to Highways.

Cllr Houghton reported that Normans Bridge would be closed for repairs. This had been advertised on the National Trust social media and website but not shared on the village social media. Cllr Pepper advised that he had met with the National Trust and the work was to strengthen the beams

on Normans Bridge. Cllr Pepper would ask the National Trust to share the information on local social media.

Cllr Cogan reported that the Mary Hatch Almshouses was advertising for a new clerk.

Cllr Hawes advised that there had been fly tipping along Padney Road which had been reported.

Cllr Robinson advised that there was an invasive plant growing on the area of the old Meadow on Pond Green. The Parish Council were happy for Cllr Robinson to cut this down.

Cllr Robinson had been approached by some residents asking if they could plant bulbs along their boundary which was on the green. The Parish Council were happy with this as it fitted with the bulb planting scheme which was being drawn up but ask Cllr Robinson to make it clear to the resident that this would not then become the resident's boundary.

Cllr Rogers reported that water at the Butts Lane allotments was being used to fill water cubes by allotment holders. This would be monitored.

Cllr Rogers would paint the bench at the Maids Had bus stop in the next few weeks.

There were no further business and the meeting closed at 9.58pm