

**WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2024**  
**WICKEN MISSION HALL**

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

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr S Hill.

**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 parishioner enquired about the battery storage unit. This would be discussed once a planning application was received. Cllr Hill would be reporting her findings regarding the safety of units such as these at the January meeting.

**4. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 12 November 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 12 November 2024**

**5.1** Hawes Lane culvert – This would be looked at when the brambles had died back.

**5.2** Painting of the Parish Benches – This would be completed by the Parish Councillors when time allowed.

**5.3** Repair of the Manhole Cover – The work had been completed but the final cost was well over the estimate provided by Openreach. Openreach had made the council aware when work had started that the cost would increase as they had found more work was needed than quoted for. It was noted that only Openreach contractors could complete the work. There was a question over the invoice as VAT had not been included on the final invoice but had been included in the paperwork. It was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Rogers that the invoice was paid once the correct amount (VAT) was established. All were in favour.

**5.4** Wicken Lode Maintenance – The National Trust had completed the work on the agreed section of the Lode. This reestablished the rights for parish residents to use that section of the waterway for leisure. Further work would be completed by the National Trust annually.

- 5.5** Changing Rooms Refurbishment –The drawing for the redesign of the changing rooms had been submitted to ECDC for a Certificate of Lawfulness confirming that full planning permission was not required.
- 5.6** Bus Franchise –The agenda had been too full to invite the Stagecoach manager to present to the meeting. Cllr Vellacott would update on the Demand Responsive service.
- 5.7** Allotment Turnaround Grass Protection Mesh – Cllr Pepper had completed the laying of the mesh. The Parish Council thanked him for the work.
- 5.8** Pond Maintenance and Duck House – The muck away had been collected. The duck house would be repaired by the next nesting season. Cllrs Robinson and Hill would promote the Pond Clearance Working Group, and a further update would be made in the Spring.
- 5.9** Removal of the Canopy and Hedge on Footpath 27 – This had been completed.
- 5.10** Parking Along North Street – The parking along North Street had greatly improved.
- 5.11** Casual Vacancy – A casual vacancy had been advertised with a closing date of 31 December 2024.
- 5.12** Posts on Pond Green – The posts on Pond Green had been moved closer to the road to stop further erosion.
- 5.13** 20mph Speed Limit – Details had been in the local papers. The flashing Speedwatch sign along Church Road would need to be moved once the 20mph came in to force.
- 5.14** Purchase of a Christmas Tree - Cllr Rogers had investigated purchasing a Christmas tree but had found the stands available were not suitable. This would be looked into for next year and would be on the October agenda.

## **6. Planning Matters**

**6.1** Installation of a remote-control operated roller shutter garage door in the car port and erection of an 1800mm high close boarded timber fence on 100mm x 100mm timber fence posts on the rear boundary. 12 Augustine Place, Wicken. CB7 6AX 24//0119/FUL

There were no objections.

**6.2** Installation of a remote-control operated roller shutter garage door in the car port and erection of an 1800mm high close boarded timber fence on 100mm x 100mm timber fence posts on the rear boundary. 10 Augustine Place, Wicken. CB7 6AX 24/01223/FUL

There were no objections.

**6.3** Installation of a remote-control operated roller shutter garage door in the car port and erection of an 1800mm high close boarded timber fence on 100mm x 100mm timber fence posts on the rear boundary. 14 Augustine Place, Wicken. Ref 24/01224/FUL

There were no objections.

**6.4** Erection of 2 detached four-bedroom homes with garages, off-street parking and associated landscaping. Site to the East of 38A Chapel Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/01119/FUL

The Parish Council had the following objections:

- The development is outside the development area.
- The application states this is a brown field site which is incorrect.
- Materials are not in keeping with the neighbouring property at 38 and 38A Chapel Lane

**6.5** Single storey front extension, garage conversion and associated works. 3 Upware, Ely, Cambs. Ref 24/01208/FUL

There were no objections.

## **6.6 Update on Planning Applications Approved/Refused by ECDC**

### **Approved**

- Installation of remote-control roller shutter garage door. 1 Augustine Place, Wicken. Ref 24/00908/FUL
- Installation of remote-control roller shutter garage door. 4 Augustine Place, Wicken. Ref 24/00901/FUL
- Demolition of the west outshut of the tractor shed and provision of 3 containers. National Truust, Wicken Fen. Ref 23/01375/FUL

## **7. County and District Councillor Reports**

County Council Hunt reported the following:

- The 20mph speed limit in Wicken had been agreed. Cllr Hunt supported this on the democratic basis due to the successful consultation by Wicken Parish Council.
- The Wicken to Soham cycle path had been delayed due to water voles.
- There had been an error in the Fen Scene magazine and the actual donation from ECDC to the Princess of Wales hospital was £750k not £75k.
- Cllr Hunt continued to support the GP surgeries at Soham and Stretham which should give Wicken residents an option of which surgery to go to.
- Cllr Hunt continues to fight for the road between Witcham Toll and Haddenham to be downgraded to a B road.

District Councillor Vellacott reported the following:

- An extra ordinary meeting would be taking place at ECDC following a change in political groups.
- The implementation of the Demand Responsive bus service in week was due to take place mid to late December. This service would provide a bus service which could be requested through an app or via telephone. There were 4 virtual stops in Wicken and one in Upware. People could travel anywhere in ECDC for £2 per journey (free for bus pass holders). It would run from 6.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Saturday. It was important that the service was used as it was important that a demand for the service was shown. It was

suggested that posters were put up at Ely train station for people wanting to visit Wicken Fen.

- Bus franchise – this was ongoing and guaranteed that certain routes would run and would be subsidised by the Combined Authority.
- The planning application for 4 terraced houses on the plot East of 38 Chapel Lane had gone to appeal. Cllr Vellacott would forward his representations.
- Battery Storage Facility – there had been some confusion around the application which had been submitted for the facility. This was just a screening application and not the full planning application.
- ECDC was running a campaign for the elderly to help them apply for pension credit.
- ECDC had taken control of the social housing.
- The police had held speed camera sessions in the village. These were 30-minute sessions in the hotspots in the village.
- The parish had a new Highways Officer. Full repair of the Lower Road section to the west of Wicken 4x4 was scheduled for the new year.
- It was likely that the Local Plan would be adopted in 2028.

***Cllr Hunt left the meeting at 8.55pm***

## **8. Neighbourhood Plan Update**

The next meeting was on 13 January 2025 when a chair would be appointed.

## **9. Repair of the Churchyard Paths**

Further work was required on the churchyard paths and the following was discussed:

- Resin bonded.
- Gravel grids

It was decided that the gravel grids would be a cheaper option and would provide a solid surface. The gravel already in place could be reused to fill the grids. Cllr Pepper would measure the area and work out an estimated cost. The clerk would start the process of applying for a faculty from the Diocese.

## **10. Review and Approval of the Fees and Charges**

**A review of prices from April 2025 was discussed and the following agreed:**

### **Interments**

Interment in the cemetery in a grave for which an exclusive right of burial has been granted at a depth not exceeding 5 feet 6 inches of:

		<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
a	the body of a still born child or a child whose age at the time of death did not exceed one month	£30	£30
b	a person whose age at the time of death exceeded one month but did not exceed 12 years	£50	£50

c	a person whose age at the time of death exceeded 12 years	£150	£200
d	cremated remains	£100	£150
e	cremated remains in ashes plot 2 feet by 2 feet for which exclusive right of burial has been granted (Single-depth plot 18 in, double-depth 2 ft.):	£100	£150

### Burial Grants

Exclusive right of burial for a period not exceeding 99 years in the first instance in:

f	an earthen grave 9 feet by 4 feet in the cemetery	£200	£300
g	an infant plot in the cemetery	£70	£70
h	ashes plot 2 feet by 2 feet in the cemetery	£100	£200

### Memorials

No memorial may be erected until 6 months after the interment and kerb stones are no longer allowed in any part of the cemetery. For the erection of:

l	a headstone not exceeding 3 feet in height	£150	£200
j	a monument in the form of a vase not exceeding an overall height of 2 feet	£100	£150
k	a grey stone plaque with white lettering 1 foot by 1 foot on ashes plots	£100	£150
l	a stone vase 6"x6"x6" in the churchyard or cemetery	£60	£100
m	any inscription after the first one on a gravestone or monument	£60	£100

It was agreed to remove the option of ashes being interred in the churchyard unless previously requested.

The following charges were also amended from April 2025:

	2023/24	2024/25
Green Licence (from October 2025)	£30	£50
Green Hire	£30	£50
30x30 marquee	£150 parishioner £300 commercial	£200 parishioner £400 commercial
30 X 20 marquee	£120 parishioner £240 commercial	£170 parishioner £340 commercial
20 X 15 marquee	£80 parishioner £160 commercial	£130 parishioner £260 commercial

The allotment rent would be revised at the January 2025 meeting.

The Recreation Ground rates would be reviewed at the next Recreation Ground Committee meeting. The peppercorn rent of £1 per annum would be unchanged.

***The parishioner left the meeting at 9.30pm***

## 11. 2025/26 Precept

The precept had not been increased in 2024 and remained at £32500 for 2024/25. Due to the increase in houses this had actually been a percentage decrease on 2023/24 of 4.7%. The clerk advised the following was taken into consideration when estimating the expenditure for 2025/26:

- Where contracts were in place the estimated cost had remained the same. Where the costs for 2024/25 had been sufficient these had not been increased for example hall hire and IT costs.
- The 3-year grass cutting and hedges contract was due to go out for tender to start in March 2025. Costs for this were unknown and the cutting regime had been amended so 20% had been added to the current cost.
- The insurance policy also needed to go out for tender in July 2025. There had been a need to claim on the insurance in 2024 due to vandalism on the Pond Green Play Park. Therefore £350 had been added to the current cost as an estimate.
- There had been an increase in the salary of the clerk.
- The estimate for tree work had been increased as there was concern regarding a tree on the Mission Hall
- The training budget had increased as there was more engagement with training by the Councillors and clerk.
- The Parish Council discussed the costs of engaging a consultant for the Neighbourhood Plan. This cost could not be met through the use of CIL money.

The following was agreed:

- £5k would be removed from the current ringfenced funds for the repair of the church wall and ringfenced for the Neighbourhood Plan project to keep the increase of the precept to a minimum.
- Any unspent funds from 2024/25 would also be ringfenced for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The precept for 2025/26 would be set at £37k. This was proposed by Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Houghton. All were in favour.

## **12. Pride of Place Application**

Cllr Robinson reported that the Pride of Place grant had been approved for £670. This included funds for the following:

- 2 multi occupancy bat boxes
- an owl box for the Recreation Ground
- 500 bulbs
- Wildflower seeds

Cllr Robinson would lead on the project. The funds needed to be spent by the end of March 2025.

## **13. Donation of Bulbs from the Wicken Flower and Produce Show**

The Wicken Flower and Produce Show had kindly donated some bulbs to the village. Cllr Rogers would work with Cllr Robinson on a plan for where the bulbs could be planted which would complement the planting for the Pride of Place grant. A plan would be discussed at the January meeting.

#### **14. Thermal Camera Loan Scheme**

Cllr Robinson would submit an expression of interest to borrow the camera for a 2-week period. Cllr Robinson agreed to be the designated person for the camera.

#### **15. Minute Binding**

There were 14 years' worth of minutes to be bound. Cllr Houghton proposed that 2 years' worth of minutes would be bound every year, this was seconded by Cllr Hawes. All were in favour.

#### **16. St Andrews Primary School Admissions**

The clerk was monitoring the St Andrew's website awaiting the consultation to change the admissions criteria and had found that the Admissions policy had been changed on the website to a draft policy for admissions for 2024/25 once again removing the criteria for Wicken Parish children. The clerk had been in contact with DEMAT again and they had advised that they were submitting an appeal to the Secretary of State to amend the criteria. The Parish Council were disappointed that DEMAT had gone back on their decision to consult for September 2026. It was agreed to challenge this with the Secretary of State and contact the local MP to ask for support. District Councillor Vellacott would also discuss this with the MP.

#### **17. Permission for the Clerk to Agree up to Three Extra Cuts Per Year of the Football Pitch**

Due to the change in climate the football pitch grass was growing longer than the usual cutting season. As a result of this the football club were asking for additional cuts, and the clerk was needing to obtain permission from the Councillors each time. It was agreed that the clerk could authorise 3 additional cuts per year and anything above that would need to be agreed by the Council.

#### **18. Renewal of the Membership of Cambridgeshire ACRE**

It was agreed to renew the membership for another year.

#### **19. Upware Residents Association**

The clerk advised that the URA had previously had some issues replacing the current secretary. The URA had advised that the situation had now been sorted and the URA would continue.

### **20. Financial Matters**

#### **20.1 Bill payments**

Rachel James	Clerk wages December 2024. This included the pay increase backdated to April 2024	£2036.47
HMRC PAYE	PAYE December 2024 (tax and NI)	£675.30
RH Landscapes	Removal of hedge canopy over footpath and chipping of fly tipping on cemetery car park (CIL money)	£1764.00
RH Landscapes	Cultivation and reseedling of Upware Open Space (CIL money)	£2640.00

British Gas	Electric charges 8 November 2024 to 6 Dec 2024	£21.43
Mead Construction	2 loads of muck away from the pond (CIL money)	£1320.00
Les Yardy Fencing	Moving the fence posts around Pond Green and repaid of posts on Cross Green (CIL money)	£1104.00
Burwell Print Centre	Around and About August edition	£298.78
Burwell Print Centre	Around and About December edition	£203.58
SSE	Streetlight charges 1 August 2024 to 31 October 2024	£120.91
Wave	Water charges 3/9/24 to 2/12/24 Butts Lane	£19.31
Wave	Water charges 3/9/24 to 2/12/24 Rec	£21.25
Wave	Water charges 3/9/24 to 2/12/24 Cemetery	£17.37
British Telecom	Raising of manhole cover (CIL money)	£2656.53

## 20.2 Monthly Finance update

The monthly finance report showed the Parish Council was in a stable position. The clerk advised that there was a need to transfer £15k from the savings account to the current account. This was noted.

## 20.3 Bank Reconciliation to 29 November 2024

This had been circulated and noted.

## 21. Use of the Parish Council Seal on the Reissue of the Deed of Easement for 26 High Street, Wicken

It was noted that the Parish Council seal was used to reissue the deed of easement for 26 High Street, Wicken which had been rejected by the Land Registry due to an admin error.

## 22. Items for Information

The clerk advised that there had been communication with the Vicar of Burwell regarding the charging of fees for the internment of ashes in the plot in the closed churchyard. This would be discussed in full when further information was known.

Cllr Rash thanked Highways for cleaning the roadside gutters and for spraying the weeds.

It was noted that the A1123 would be closed between Wicken and Stretham between 6 January and 20 January 2025 for work to be completed on the Upware corner. There would be no access to Upware and Upware residents would need to access the village via Swaffham Prior or Reach.

Cllr Pepper advised that the solar panel had been installed on the Speedwatch sign at the Stretham end of the village.

There were no further items for information and the meeting closed at 10.29pm