

Draft minutes not yet accepted.

**WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD
AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2023
WICKEN MISSION HALL**

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):

B Pepper, P Rash, S Hill, C Robinson, M Hawes and S Wilson, District Councillor Vellacott, County Councillor Hunt and 2 members of the public.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

With the Chair and Vice Chair absent from the meeting a vote was taken and it was agreed that Councillor Pepper should chair the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Barnes (holiday), L Houghton (holiday) and J Rogers (personal) and District Councillor Bovingdon.

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.

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.

Cllr Hawes joined the meeting at 7.35pm

The owner of Bakers Cottage requested to speak regarding agenda item 8 and informed the Council of the history of both pieces of land. The owners were requesting that the same agreements were carried forward to future owners of Bakers Cottage.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8 August 2023

The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

5. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 8 August 2023

5.1 Mission Hall BT manhole –The clerk was finding it difficult to find the correct department at BT/Openreach to seek permission.

5.2 Parking on the Village Greens – This would continue to be monitored.

5.3 Offer of bark chippings – The clerk had researched the price of mulch which was in the region of £32 for 40kg. Cllr Pepper would try to source some free chippings.

Draft minutes not yet accepted.

5.4 Public Meeting – The format of the meeting would be discussed via email.

5.5 Pond Green Play Area – The safety surface was due to be replaced on 20th September 2023.

5.6 Vitality of Inonnotus Hispidus tree – The clerk was awaiting the report.

5.7 Visit to Wicken Fen – This had taken place on 21 August 2023 and was well attended. The visit was very informative, and it was hoped would lead to an improved relationship between the Parish Council and the management at Wicken Fen. The management at Wicken Fen were focusing on the carbon footprint and would look into assisting with getting buses to Wicken.

5.8 Speedwatch – Cllr Pepper had led a Speedwatch session on 11 August 2023 at the Stretham end of the village. The highest number speed recorded was 62mph in the 30mph speed limit. Cllr Pepper was hoping to complete a session each month. The details would be passed to the police. Cllr Hawes advised that the flashing speed sign was flashing green even if the motorist was going over the speed limit. Cllr Pepper would arrange for this to be amended to red.

5.9 CIL Money – The clerk had contacted ECDC regarding spending the CIL money but had not yet received a reply.

5.10 Safer Communities Fund – The clerk had met with Prestige Fire and Safety to discuss mobile CCTVs. These would need electricity to run and the areas where they were most needed did not have electric.

5.11 Wicken Amateurs Club Update of Agreement – The Recreation Committee was meeting on 13 September 2023, and this would be raised at the meeting.

5.12 Church Yard Paths – Work was due to start on 19 September 2023. The following materials were required:

- 25m membrane
- 2 tonne pea shingle
- 100m 4"x1" rough sawn timber

The Parish Council confirmed that the bank card could be used to purchase the materials. Cllr Pepper agreed to trim in front of the cemetery railings.

It was agreed that the order of the agenda should be amended.

7. County and District Councillors Reports

District Councillor Vellacott:

- Had submitted concerns to ECDC regarding the planning application and change of use for Land Northwest of 9 Stretham Road (item 6.2 on the agenda). This would go to the ECDC Planning Committee as it was outside the planning envelope. Cllr Vellacott would attend the meeting.
- A Youth Fusion event had taken place at Ely. It was hoped that funding could be secured to hold these events next year.
- Operations Services Committee. The committee had discussed the Environment Act.
- Seven refuge vehicles had been purchased which ran on hydrated oil.
- Working to get Soham Scout Hut turned into a Youth Centre

Draft minutes not yet accepted.

- Had contacted the Combined Authority and GCP regarding buses for Wicken but had received a standard reply. He would continue to raise the matter.
- There was a planned road closure in Upware which would cause major disruption for the Upware residents.
- Would be attending a meeting on 18 September 2023 regarding Dementia Friendly Villages
- Would be attending the URA meeting on 4th October 2023
- Would be attending every other meeting but contactable by telephone or email.

County Councillor Hunt

- ECDC were looking at setting up a scheme similar to Special Constable who could issue parking tickets and fines for littering. These volunteers would be trained on speeding issues and could attend the Speedwatch sessions and issue tickets.
- ECDC – no council tax increase, free car parking in Ely and balanced budget
- A1123 – the motion to downgrade the A1123 from an A road to a B road had been overturned. Cllr Hunt was now focusing on getting the A1421 downgraded to a B road.
- Stretham had voted against a new GP facility in the village.
- Congestion charge had been dropped.
- In favour of 20mph in specific roads but not a blanket change across towns and cities
- There were plans for a major rebuild of the minor injuries at the Princess of Wales hospital.
- Would be attending 4 meetings per year.

Cllr Hunt and Vellacott left the meeting at 8.40pm

8. Strip of Land Between 32 and 36 High Street Wicken and Fencing of the Green in Front of Bakers Cottage

The owners of Bakers Cottage were in the process of selling the property and had asked for the current land agreements to be transferred to the new owners.

Strip of Land Between 32 and 36 High Street

It was agreed that the same agreement would be offered to the next owner.

Fencing of the Green in Front of Bakers Cottage

It was agreed that the fence could remain if any new owner wanted to continue maintenance of the area. If they preferred to remove the fence it would need to be put back to grass. A garden land agreement would be put in place. Cllr Wilson proposed that, due to the size of the land compared to other garden land in the village the annual rent should be £30 which would be reviewed along with the other village rents. This was seconded by Cllr Robinson. All were in favour.

The 2 residents left at 8.55pm

6. Planning Matters

6.1 Construction of new tractor barn with driveway, gate, fencing and creation of new turning head for Back Lane. Land to the East of 16 Back Lane, Wicken. Ref 23/00912/FUL

Wicken Parish Council would like a condition applied that the new tractor barn cannot be converted into a residential dwelling.

Draft minutes not yet accepted.

6.2 Change of use from Use Class B8 to C3 residential including the removal of storage containers, erection of four detached dwellings, along with associated works including closing and relocating the existing access. Land Northwest of Stretham Road, Wicken. Ref 23/00894/FUL

The Parish Council objected to the application due to the following reasons:

- The proposal is outside the defined development envelope for Wicken contravening GROWTH2. Wicken has particularly suffered with speculative development that has yet to be assimilated into the small community so allowing more seems contrary to the fully adopted Local Plan 2015.
- The development is for large properties when Wicken's part of the Local Plan 2015 clearly states the need for smaller units.
- The proposal is deemed to have poor design and not in keeping with other nearby dwellings.

It will affect the visual impact as you approach the village from the west and is much more dense than surrounding properties and so will affect the visual impact on a countryside location. Stretham Road dwellings have a linear form; tandem style of these dwellings does not appear anywhere else in the village.

- Loss of existing trees
- Paragraph 6.4 mentions condensing boilers but paragraph 6.1 states ASHPs
- No provision for street lighting
- Sustainability will see the need for residents to have cars, but no garages have been included in the design.
- To the best of our knowledge there has been no attempt in recent years to use the property as a class B8 property before requesting change of use to C3 residential

6.2 Update on Planning Applications Approved/Refused by ECDC

There had been no updates from ECDC.

9. Hedge Adjacent to Wicken Mission Hall Car Park

A letter had been sent to the occupiers of 52 High Street asking them to remove the hedge which had been planted along the strip of land adjacent to their front fence. A letter of response had been received which was read out at the meeting. It was agreed that evidence should be collected regarding the ownership of the land and a meeting arranged with the parishioner to discuss such.

10. Request for Permission for a Security fence to be Sited on the Allotment Land by the Owners of 5 Church Road, Wicken.

It was agreed that the fence could be sited on the allotment land until 31 December 2023.

11. Pond Green Meadow

Cllr Robinson gave an update on the wildlife on the Pond Green Meadow. It was agreed that Cllr Robinson could plant some plug plants.

Draft minutes not yet accepted.

12. Pride of Place Grant

ECDC were offering grant of up to £15k for community projects. Cllr Robinson would source a price for an information board for the Pond Green Meadow.

14. Financial Matters

14.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages September 2023	£475.06
HMRC PAYE	PAYE September 2023	£118.60
RH Landscapes	August cuts	£840.00
SSE	Streetlight electricity August 2023	£51.04
Community Heartbeat	Annual support cost for defibrillator	£162.00
A& Window Cleaning	Cleaning of the bus shelter	£50.00
Burwell Print Centre	Around and About September to November	£217.98
Balfour Beatty	Maintenance contract	£540.00
PKF Littlejohn	Limited assurance review of AGAR for year end 31 March 2023	£252.00
Roland Fletcher	Mid-season 2 nd Maintenance cut of footpaths	£795.60
JD Woodroffe	New glass for changing room window	£64.67

14.2 Monthly Finance update

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

14.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 August 2023

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

15. Items for Information

The number of tractors travelling fast through the village was discussed. The Clerk would write to the local large farmers asking them to remind their tractor drivers to slow down through Upware and Wicken.

Cllr Rash raised the concern of the weeds growing at the side of the roads. This would be on October agenda.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 21.35.