

**WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024**  
**WICKEN MISSION HALL**

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):  
Cllrs M Hawes, S Hill, L Houghton, P Rash, B Pepper, and J Rogers. There were no parishioners.

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs R Barnes, C Robinson, County Council B Hunt and District Councillors L Vellacott and I 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 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.**

There was no public participation.

**4. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8 October 2024**

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

**4.1 Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 8 October 2024**

**4.1** Repair of Maltings footpath—Cllr Rash had completed further work on the Maltings footpath and would continue with the project next summer. The Parish Council thanked Cllr Rash for completing the project.

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

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

**4.4** Pond Green Play Equipment—The replacement equipment had been installed. The clerk had placed an advert on Facebook for volunteers to help paint the swings and tidy the play area. One person had volunteered, and it was decided to leave this project until the Spring.

**4.5** Repair of the Manhole Cover—This had been completed.

**4.6** Wicken Lode Maintenance—The National Trust had started the work in the area with reeds being cut back as much as possible. Dredging of around a quarter of the length would be

completed on 18 November 2024. The Parish Council thanked Alan Kell for his assistance with this.

**4.7** Changing Rooms Refurbishment – The refurbishment of the showers had been completed. The drawing for the redesign of the changing rooms should be completed week commencing 18 November 2024.

**4.8** Bus Franchise – The Clerk would invite Stagecoach to present to the Parish Council at the December meeting.

**4.9** Allotment Turnaround Grass Protection Mesh – Cllr Pepper would collect this from storage and lay the mesh.

**4.10** Pond Maintenance and Duck House – The pond clearance had taken place, and the Clerk would contact Meads to arrange for the reeds to be collected now they had dried out. Jerry Woodroffe would repair the duck house before the next nesting season.

**4.11** St Andrews Primary School Admissions – The clerk would add this to the next Around and About submission ensuring residents knew how important it was to engage with any admissions consultations as this would greatly affect the future children in the village.

**4.12** Minute Binding – Cllr Houghton suggested the minute binding was completed gradually over a period of a few years. This would be on the December agenda.

**4.13** Removal of the Canopy and Hedge on Footpath 27 – This would be completed on 20th November 2024.

**4.14** Parking Along North Street – The clerk had written to the residents of North Street and there had been some improvement with the parking. This would be monitored.

## **5. Planning Matters**

### **5.1 Three terraced, two-bedroom dwellings with off-street parking and associated landscaping. Site to the east of 38A Chapel Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/01445/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
- The roof should be subservient to the cottages and bungalows neighbouring the property.
- Safety issue with the vehicles not being able to enter and leave in forward gear.

The Parish Council is pleased to see that the developer has submitted an application for small house as it is known that the village need smaller units.

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

**Approved**

- Various tree work at 12 Pond Green, Wicken CB7 5XX Ref 24/01041/TRE. It was noted that this application had not been received from the ECDC Tree Warden for comment although the application was within the conservation area.
- Proposed garage/store. 34 North Street, Wicken, Ref 24/00991/FUL

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

There were no reports from the County and District Councillors.

## **7. Resignation of Cllr Wilson**

Cllr Wilson had resigned her position on the Parish Council and the Parish Council offered their deepest condolences. The Parish Council thanked Cllr Wilson for her hard work and dedication. The clerk would inform ECDC and arrange for a Casual Vacancy to be advertised.

## **8. Increase in the Number of Trustees for the Mary Hatch Almshouses with Diamond Jubilee Cottages**

A request had been received from the Mary Hatch Almshouses to increase the number of trustees from 5 to 7 to promote sustainability of the charity. Approval of the change was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Rogers. All were in favour.

## **9. Energy Storage Facility**

A presentation had been made in the village hall on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024 regarding the proposal for an energy storage facility. Cllr Hill agreed to research the impartial facts around the safety of these facilities and would report back at the December meeting. The Parish Council would make representation when the application was submitted but it was noted that the site was just within the Soham boundary.

## **10. Neighbourhood Plan Update**

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Party had met on 11 November 2024. The application for the designated area of Wicken, Padney and Upware Parish had been approved. A timeline was being drawn up and the next meeting would be on 13 January 2025.

## **11. Posts on the Pond Green**

The posts had been installed on Pond Green, but the positioning was causing concern that the green could still be eroded. Investigation had shown that the advice of the 1-meter distance from the highway which had been given to the clerk was incorrect as the posts were to protect a village green. Highways had confirmed in writing that the posts could be moved closer to the road. The following was discussed:

- Leaving the posts in the current position and monitoring possible erosion
- Putting up no parking signs
- Repositioning the signs

The clerk had received a quote of £900 plus VAT to reposition the posts.

Moving the posts was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Rogers. There were 4 votes in favour and 1 abstain. The clerk would arrange for the posts to be moved.

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

Cllr Robinson had submitted a Pride of Place application. Cllr Rogers advised that the Wicken Horticultural Show had agreed to purchase some bulbs to be planted in the village. The Parish Council thanked the Horticultural Show for the kind offer, and this would be put on the December agenda.

## **13. Thermal Camera Loan Scheme**

This would be on the December agenda.

## **14. Request from a Resident for a Change to the Cutting Regime**

As the cutting regime had been agreed the Parish Council were unable to consider any changes for 6 months. The request was noted.

## **15. Review of the Risk Register**

The following would be added to the risk register:

- Social activities
- PAT testing

## **16. Review of the Village Action Plan Including the Climate Strategy**

- The Action Plan would be updated to reflect the change in the speed limit to 20mph.
- The heat energy scheme would be removed from the action plan as this had not proved popular in Swaffham Prior.
- The teracycle scheme was no longer in place outside the Methodist Chapel. This would be removed from the action plan.

## **17. Financial Matters**

### **17.1 Bill payments**

Rachel James	Clerk wages November 2024	£509.60
HMRC PAYE	PAYE November 2024	£127.40
RH Landscapes	Grass cutting October cuts 2024	£1260.00
RH Landscapes	Crown Lift in Pond Green Play Area	£300.00
British Gas	Changing rooms electric 8 October to 8 November 24	£42.04
Eventbrite (NALC)	Training for Cllr Rogers	£39.22
CB7 Oil and Gas	Repair of showers in the changing rooms (CIL money)	£1853.00
HE Services	Hire of digger and driver for village pond clearing (CIL money)	£829.86
Caloo Ltd	Replacement plays equipment at part of insurance claim	£3135.72
Les Yardy Fencing	Supply and fit fencing posts around Pond Green (CIL money)	£1536.00

## **17.2 Monthly Finance update**

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

## **17.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 October 2024**

This had been circulated and noted.

## **17.4 Half Yearly Budget to 30 September 2024**

The half yearly budget showed a stable position. This would be published on the website.

## **17.5 Non-Payment of the Marquee Charge by the Maids Head**

It was noted that the Maids Head had not paid the £300 charge for the use of the marquee in June 2024. It was agreed that the clerk should write to the landlord with a final demand for the money. Any future request to use the marquee would be referred to the Parish Council for approval before letting out.

## **17.6 Donation to the Royal British Legion**

The Parish Council thanked Martin Hopkins for organising the service on Remembrance Day and also Nigel Houghton for cutting the grass and Rob Gorham for cleaning the war memorial. The wreath which was purchased for the Parish Council to lay was £25.00. Cllr Houghton proposed a donation to total £100.00. This was seconded by Cllr Rogers. All were in favour.

## **17.7 Pay Increase for Clerk in line with the NALC Recommendations Backdated to 1 April 2024**

### ***The clerk left the meeting at 10pm***

Agreement had been reached with the Unions on the rates of pay from 1 April 2024 for local government services. The clerk was currently on point 16. It was agreed unanimously that this should raise to point 29 and backdate to 1 April 2024. The clerk's expenses should also be increased by 10% to £605 per year with immediate effect.

### ***The clerk returned to the meeting at 10.10pm***

## **17.8 Payment of the Clerk's Annual Expenses**

The annual expenses were paid at the new rate of £605.00.

## **18. Update on the 20mph Speed Limit Scheme in Wicken**

Cllr Pepper had met with Cllr Hunt and a number of representatives from Highways on 5 November 2024 to discuss the 20mph scheme. The decision had been delegated to the head of Parking and Traffic Management in consultation with Cllr Hunt. The scheme was approved with the adjustment of the Church Road 20mph speed limit to start at the bus stop.

## **19. Items for Information**

Cllr Rogers suggested the Parish Council purchased a Christmas tree and lights from CIL money for the Maids Head Green. It was noted that this was not on the agenda so a decision could not be made at the meeting, but it would be too late for a decision at the December meeting. It was decided that Cllr Rogers would explore the idea further and obtain the likely costs. This would then be discussed via email and any decision would be ratified at the December meeting.

There were no further items for information and the meeting closed at 10.18pm