

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2026
WICKEN MISSION HALL

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):
Cllrs A Cogan, M Hawes, S Hill, L Houghton, B Pepper, P Rash, J Rogers, District Councillor Lucius Vellacott and 2 residents.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr C Robinson, R Barnes 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.

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.

A resident raised an issue regarding the application process for an Almshouse. The Trustees of the Mary Hatch Almshouses recognised that the information to the public was not accessible, and this was being followed up.

13. Item 13 was brought forward. Proposal from the Landlord of the Maids head on the Area of the Maids head Green Outside the Pub

The landlord of the Maids Head updated the Parish Council on the progress with tidying the Maids Head area. The back area had now been cleared and would either be grassed over or used for parking. There was a plan to either put up a fence or a hedge. People were coming together to reinstate the pub sign.

Two parishioners left the meeting at 7.50pm

4. County and District Councillor Reports

County Councillor Hawker-Dawson had submitted a written report covering the following:

- Adults and Health
- Children and Young People
- Highway and Transport
- Lower Road would be resurfaced within the next 3 weeks.

District Councillor Vellacott advised the following:

- A gravel surface would be installed on the sandy surface of the cycle path when the weather improved.
- He had met with the case officer and planning officer to discuss the BESS. There were still concerns on the following areas: Biodiversity and noise levels were not ideal, ecology was inconclusive and noise levels. The Burwell BESS application had been deferred by the planning committee pending decision. It was now likely it would not go to the Planning Committee until April 2026.
- Potholes remained an issue and although the resurfacing of Back Lane had been promised this had not yet commenced. The A142 would be closed overnight for resurfacing and the resurfacing of the Downfields roundabout was imminent.
- Internal Drainage Board budgets had increased.
- ECDC could meet the housing target for the next 6.17 years.
- ECDC had frozen council tax as they could show a balanced budget for the next 2 years.

District Cllr Vellacott left the meeting at 8.12pm

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 13 January 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 13 January 2026

6.1 Highways signage – the 20mph signs for Lode Lane was ongoing. The design for the Redit Lane signs had been agreed. Highways would update One network with the information that Redit Lane was not suitable for HGVs. This was the system that Satnav companies took the information from so Satnavs should update in time.

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 –Community Pay Back had cancelled all future projects due to the lack of supervisors. 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 clerk had contacted the EA.

6.6 Upware hedge – there was no further update. The clerk would contact Highways and request enforcement.

6.7 Match Funding for the Neighbourhood Plan – The application for £5k match funding from East Cambs had been successful.

6.8 Christmas tree lights – The clerk would be meeting with the Chair of Stretham Parish Council regarding their lights.

6.9 The Old Forge hedge – This was getting overgrown and covering the North Street sign and affecting the pavement. Cllr Pepper would contact the homeowners.

7. Planning Matters

7.1 Construction of a bridge over Burwell Lode for pedestrians and cyclists, including associated approach ramps and landscaping, associated culverts, extension of the Adventurers Fen car park and new cycle parking, demolition of the existing footbridge once the new structure is operational, and associated temporary works and access from local highway network, including Newnham Drove. Burwell Lode Bridge Site, South of the Junction of Harrisons Drove and Priory Drove, Burwell CB25 0EB.

The Parish Council had no objections.

7.2 Update on Planning Applications Approved/Refused by ECDC

Approved

- Various tree works. 4 Butts Lane, Wicken ref 25/01353/TRE
- New windows and doors, demolition of rear single storey structure, instillation of solar panels, external porch and construction of bin and bike store – part retrospective. 5 Chapel Lane, Wicken Ref 25/01336/FUL

8. Neighbourhood Plan Update and Call for Sites

The wording for the call for sites was agreed. This would be circulated in the Around and About, on the Parish Council website and Facebook. The closing date for the call for sites would be 30 April 2026.

9. Tree Report and Decision on Work Needed

David Humphires had completed an arboriculture report. His recommendations were:

- **Ash Tree Lode Lane**

The reduction of lower branches on east and west side of the tree to increase light levels to the adjacent property was agreed.

- **Willow Trees on Pond Green**

The concern that the trees were contributing to the pond drying up was not likely to change without removing the trees entirely. Even pollarding or reducing their height would not made a difference. It was agreed to not complete the work on the trees at this stage and monitor.

The clerk would arrange a full tree survey in July 2026.

10. Request form the Beer Festival Committee to Allow Dogs on the Recreation Ground on the Day of the Beer festival

The rules for the recreation ground were that no dogs were allowed but some visitors to the beer festival brought dogs which created an awkward situation. The Beer Festival Committee had requested the Parish Council to review the rules for the beer festival, but it was noted that adverts for the beer festival had already been circulated stating ‘no dogs allowed’.

11. Results for the 20mph Consultation for Upware

The response rate was low with 8 residents against the proposal and 6 residents for the proposal. It was therefore agreed not to pursue the 20mph application.

12. Changing Rooms on the Recreation Ground – Update on the project and next steps

Tenders had been sent to 5 local building firms with a 4-week deadline. This would be on the March agenda. It was advised that a considerable amount of pressure had been applied to George Laurel & Partners who were slow in responding and delivering matters, creating unnecessary delays.

13. Item 13 had already been discussed.

14. Battery Storage Update

It was expected that the BESS would now be heard at the March or April Planning Committee meeting. [clerk's note: an amendment to the application had been received and would be on the March agenda]

15. Woodland Trust Tree Pack Application and Location of Trees if Successful

It was unclear if the Parish Council could apply for packs to give to residents. The clerk would enquire.

16. Initial Quote for the Resurfacing of the Multi Use Games Area and Decision if this is a Project to Proceed With

A quote had been received from Sports Courts for the resurfacing of the MUGA. The quote was £19,395.00 plus VAT with additional costs for lines. The RoSPA report was reviewed which gave the surface a low-level risk due to weeds. It was agreed that the focus would be on the changing rooms project as the costs for this were not yet known. Once this was completed the project for the resurfacing of the MUGA would be reviewed. Grant applications may be needed for the project.

17. Financial Matters

17.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages February 2026	£703.08
HMRC	Employers PAYE	£179.60
Nest Pension	Employees Contribution	£15.11
Nest Pension	Employers Contribution	£11.33
HMRC NI	Employers NI for January 2026	£72.12
David Humphries	Arboriculture Consultancy	£150.00
Amazon	Christmas Lights	£8.99
SLCC	Annual membership fee	£200.00
British Gas	Changing rooms electric 12/12/25-12/1/26	£29.56

17.2 Monthly Finance update

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

17.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 January 2026

This had been circulated and noted.

18. Purchase of a Parish Council Laptop and Associated Virus Protection

The purchase of a laptop and Office 365 software for up to £350 was proposed by Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Houghton. All were in favour.

19. Policies for Approval

19.1 IT Policy

19.2 Data Protection Policy

19.3 Privacy Policy

19.4 Subject Access Request Policy and Procedures

19.5 Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme

Approval of the policies en bloc was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Cogan. All were in favour.

20. Streetlight Maintenance Contract

Balfour Beatty had provided details of a 12-month maintenance contract. The terms of the contract had changed from the previous contract the Parish Council had with Balfour Beatty with a significant increase in costs. £1000 had been budgeted for street light maintenance in the budget. As the lights were relatively new and reliable, Cllr Rogers proposed that the Parish Council did not enter into the contract and paid for the repairs when required. This was seconded by Cllr Hill. All were in favour.

21. Items for Information

Cllr Rash raised the question of whether the Parish Council should employ someone around 10 hours per week to complete jobs in the Parish. This would be on the March agenda.

Cllr Houghton advised that there had been an accident at Afterways which had destroyed part of the hedge and there was concern regarding the plaque which gave historic information regarding the area. Cllr Pepper would investigate.

Cllr Rogers raised the issue of parking on the Mission Hall car park. This would be brought up at the Wicken Fen Forum meeting.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 10.06pm

Minutes accepted as a true and correct copy.....