

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 12 AUGUST 2025
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, L Houghton, B Pepper, P Rash, J Rogers and District Councillor Vellacott.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Hill and Robinson 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.

There was no public participation.

4. County and District Councillor Reports

District Councillor Vellacott reported on the following:

- A cross-party letter had been written to the mayor regarding the bus service and asking for a more reliable service or a timetabled service. Usage was low and the journey cost was being heavily subsidised. Those using the service were regular users, but the cancellation rate was around 30%.
- ECDC was working with local farmers and the IDB to coordinate the building of agricultural reservoirs.
- Soham Village College 3G pitch had been completed and was already being used. The official opening would be in September.
- Ely junction had not been included in government spending but was now being considered following intervention from the Mayor and local MPs.
- A Councillor Surgery was being held in Soham in August. All residents were invited to attend, and information had been circulated on Facebook.
- Youth Fusion would be taking place on 21 August 2025 in Isleham
- A fourth option had been added to the Local Government Reorganisation. A decision would be made by ECDC on their preferred option in November.
- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill was going through government which would remove the planning committee process from small developments.
- There were no further updates on the BESS, but it was thought that this would be heard at Planning Committee in October 2025

District Councillor Vellacott left the meeting at 8.25pm

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8 July 2025

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

6. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 8 July 2025

6.1 Painting of the Parish Benches – Three benches had now been painted. There were concerns regarding the bench on the riverbank at the Maltings. This would be monitored.

6.2 Lode Lane 20mph Signs – 20mph repeaters had not been installed due to the small width of verge. This was being reviewed by Highways.

6.3 Trees on the allotment – this was ongoing.

6.4 NLOW small pond on the Recreation Ground – The survey on the small ponds on the Recreation Ground had been completed. The NLOW project was now complete and the Parish Council had signed to take ownership of the projects in the village. It was noted that the pond behind the changing rooms needs to be cleaned out before it becomes overgrown.

6.5 War Memorial – the War Memorial Trust had requested further information on the water damage to the war memorial. Cllr Pepper would lead on this project.

6.6 Cross Green Parking – The posts would be erected in the near future.

6.7 Church Road Drains – Evidence of the flooding had been sent to Highways.

6.8 Footpath sign adjacent to the Butts Lane allotments – although the sign was not straight and there was some rust, CCC had decided not to replace at the moment.

6.9 Speedwatch camera data – Cllr Rogers advised that recent speed data would be retrieved from the flashing signs to enable comparison to be made against the pre-20mph limit. Data had been downloaded and would be on the September agenda.

7. Planning Matters

7.1 To vary conditions 1 (Approved Plans), 14 (Materials) and 15 (Biodiversity Improvements) or previously approved 20/00228/FUL for construction on 1 no. dwelling with garage. 12 Back Lane, Wicken, Cambs CB7 5YL. Ref 25/00788/VAR

- The Parish Council would like a condition applied that the garage cannot be turned into a separate residential dwelling in the future without an additional planning application.
- Obscure glass to be installed in the ensuite window to prevent overlooking on to the next-door property.
- Ridge height at finish to not be higher than both neighbouring properties.

7.2 Convert garage to insulated garden room and accommodation space, enclose the existing link and staircase, replace modern windows to the main house, remove existing oil tank and install air source heat pump. High Fen Farmhouse, 38 Stretham Road, Wicken CB7 5XL. Ref 25/00710/FUL

- The Parish Council would like a condition applied that the property cannot be converted into 2 separate residential dwellings in the future without an additional planning application.

7.3 Convert garage to insulated garden room and accommodation space, enclose the existing link and staircase, replace modern windows to the main house, remove existing oil tank and install air source heat pump. High Fen Farmhouse, 38 Stretham Road, Wicken CB7 5XL. Ref 25/00711/LBC

- The Parish Council would like a condition applied that the property cannot be converted into 2 separate residential dwellings in the future without an additional planning application.

7.4 Removal of conifer hedge and replace with close board fencing of 1m or 1.8m according to location – retrospective. 11 Back Lane, Wicken. Ref 25/00697/FUL

- The Parish Council had no concerns.

7.5 Update on Planning Applications Approve/Refused by ECDC

Approved/refused.

None

8. Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Neighbourhood Plan survey was with Places4People for printing and would be distributed in the next 2 weeks. The clerk had enquired about using CIL money for the survey and this could be used as long as the need for the Neighbourhood Plan met some conditions. This would be reviewed once the survey was completed.

9. Church Footpaths Scope of Work to be Completed

Cllr Pepper had measured the area for the grid, and the cost would be £435.00 including VAT. The work required would be to clear the current gravel, lay the grid and replace the gravel which was estimated to be 2 days work. The clerk would obtain quotes.

10. LHI Bid 2026/27 Projects to be Considered

The following projects were considered:

North Street parking – double yellow lines were considered but it was felt that this would move the issue down the side roads or the Mission Hall car park which could mean hall users could not park.

20mph along Lower Road – the LHI bid could not be used for 20mph zones.

Roundabout at Hawes Lane junction – roundabouts were no longer included in the scheme.

Junction of Padney Road with A1123 – the painting of the lines on the junction were considered as maintenance and therefore not covered by the LHI bid. Cllr Hawes would report to Highways for the lines to be repainted and the bollards at the junction to have reflectors.

Padney Road passing places – this would also be considered as maintenance and therefore not covered.

Signs on Redit Lane and Back Lane for vehicles to take care due to pedestrians – this could be considered. This would be on the next agenda to allow Parish Councillors time to walk the area to see if there was anywhere that signs could be erected.

11. Repainting of the Cemetery Railings

The clerk had not been able to obtain a quote for the work. The clerk had enquired about Community Payback completing the work but had not received a response. This would be on the September agenda.

12. RoSPA Report Update and Quote for Painting the Swings on Pond Green Play Park

James Home and Gardens had completed the majority of the issues raised on the RoSPA report and had quoted £400 for the painting of the swing on the Pond Green playpark. Acceptance of quote was proposed by Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Hawes. All were in favour.

13. Update from Upware Residents Association

Cllrs Rash, Pepper and Cogan had attended the URA meeting and provided feedback. The URA had requested that the Parish Council covered the costs of a consultation regarding the installation of a 20mph zone in Upware. This was agreed.

14. Facebook Request for Dog Park on the Recreation Ground

This was discussed in full, but the Council was not minded to pursue it.. It was agreed that a response to the Facebook post asking those who raised the issue and commented to form a proposal for the Parish Council to consider. This proposal should include an idea of costs, size, where the dog park could go and how it would be managed.

15. Financial Matters

15.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages August 2025	£680.23
HMRC	Employers PAYE	£173.40
Nest Pension	Employees Contribution	£13.90
Nest Pension	Employers Contribution	£10.42
HMRC NI	Employers NI for August 2025	£67.58
RH Landscapes	July cuts	£1392.00
British Gas	Changing rooms electric to 10 August 2025	£27.38
SSE	Streetlight electric 1/5/25 to 30/6/25	£80.18
SSE	Streetlight electric 1/7/25-31/7/25	£36.21
James Home and Garden	Rec and Play Park maintenance following RoSPA report	£648.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP	External auditor	£378.00
Roland Fletcher	Mid-season cut	£782.40

15.2 Monthly Finance update

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

15.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 July 2025

This had been circulated and noted.

15.4 2024/25 Audit

The Parish Council had received an unqualified audit. Thanks were extended to the Clerk for her hard work in ensuring a positive outcome.

15.5 Transfer from the Savings Account

The Parish Council agreed to £10k being transferred from the savings account to the current account.

15.6 Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2025/26

The pay agreement had been approved by the Unions. Cllr Rogers proposed the statutory pay rise for point 29 backdated to 1 April 2025. This was seconded by Cllr Barnes. All were in favour.

16. Items for Information

- The Parish Council had given permission for the Greens to be used on 27 September for the dog show which was postponed due to the hot weather on fete day.
- There had been a report of weeds in the Maids Head bus stop. Cllr Pepper would remove them.
- There was concern with the weeds and reeds growing in the Lode. The National Trust would be completing further maintenance in the Autumn. [clerks note: the weeds had been removed along a stretch of Monks Lode by the Environment Agency]
- Cllr Rash would continue with the laying or plannings along the Maltings footpath.
- The Parish Council were happy to have posters put up on telegraph poles and streetlights advertising local events, but a number of posters had been put up for individual businesses. These would be removed. Technically, Highways do not allow any form of poster or advertisement to be put on Highways property.

There was no further business, and the meeting closed at 9.50pm

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