

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026
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, S Hill, L Houghton, P Rash, C Robinson, County Councillor Hawker-Dawson and 2 residents.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr B Pepper and J Rogers and District Councillor Vellacott.

2. Nomination of Chair for the Meeting

Cllr Houghton was proposed as chair for the meeting by Cllr Barnes and seconded by Cllr Hawes. All were in favour. Cllr Houghton accepted the role of chair but would not be able to chair item 11.

3. 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.**

Cllr Houghton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 11.

4. 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 Houghton spoke as a parishioner and raised concerns regarding the length of time taken for the tenders to be distributed for the changing rooms.

A request had been received from Ben McGowan to join the meeting by Teams to discuss a proposal for a mobile village shop. There were issues with connections, and it was agreed that he could join later in the meeting.

5. County and District Councillor Reports

County Councillor Hawker-Dawson advised the following:

- Extra crews were dealing with the large number of potholes and admin had been reallocated from other business teams to help. The extra help meant that Highways was fixing an average of 2000 potholes per week. The Transport committee had allocated £58m from the capital main fund for Highways.
- The Central Government consultation on the LGR closes 15 March 2026.

Cllr Cogan raised the disappointment that not all potholes had been repaired when the Upware road was closed. District Councillor Hawker-Dawson will enquire whether this is on the capital maintenance list.

County Councillor Hawker-Dawson left the meeting at 7.50pm

District Councillor Vellacott had submitted a written report with the following details:

- Upware to Ely bus is out for consultation and possibly being run by Tiger on Demand but without the need to book.
- Planning Enforcement case has been opened regarding the vehicular short cut road from the A1123 to Soham.
- A142 is being resurfaced in places with overnight closures.
- The urgent works on Back Lane have not yet been completed.
- ECDC is freezing the council tax for the 13th year.

A member of the public joined the meeting via Teams at 7.55pm

The connection issue had been resolved and Ben McGowan presented on his business idea of a mobile rural shop visiting Wicken for an hour once a day. This would be something the Parish Council would be interested in supporting.

A member of the public left the meeting at 8.10pm

Item 8.2 was brought forward.

8.2 Two storey extension, demolition of existing outbuildings, driveway enhancement, erection of two outbuildings, 1.8m timber fence and addition of solar panels. Briarways, 11 Pond Green, Wicken. Ref 25/001354/FUL

The Parish Council had no objections.

Two residents left the meeting at 8.15pm

6. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 10 February 2026

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

7. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 10 February 2026

7.1 Highways signage – the 20mph signs for Lode Lane was ongoing.

7.2 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.

7.3 Painting of the Cemetery Railings –The clerk would report the condition of the footpath from the cemetery to Hall Farm to Highways.

7.4 Land rear of 28 Stretham Road – this was ongoing.

7.5 Erosion of the bank on the lode at the Maltings – this was ongoing.

7.6 Upware hedge –The clerk would contact County Cllr Hawker-Dawson and ask for his assistance.

7.7 Christmas tree lights – The clerk would be meeting with the Chair of Stretham Parish Council regarding their lights. Cllr Hill would also attend.

7.8 The Old Forge hedge – The homeowners had cut the hedge back. Further work was needed to reduce the height, but this would have to be completed after the nesting season.

7.9 Neighbourhood Plan – The call for sites was in the Around and About and on Facebook. The clerk would contact local landowners. The closing date was 30 April 2026.

7.10 Tree Works – The tree works for the ash tree had been ordered.

7.11 Quote for the Resurface of the MUGA – This was on hold until the cost of the changing rooms was known.

7.12 Parish Council Laptop – The laptop had been purchased. Cllr Hawes would load Office 365 on to the laptop once this was purchased.

7.13 Afterways Plaque – This had been located and would be repaired and reinstalled.

8. Planning Matters

8.1 Replace Windows in the Main House. High Fen Farmhouse, 38 Stretham Road, Wicken. Ref 26/00192/LBC

The Parish Council had no objections.

8.. Memorandum Notification of Amendment of Planning Application. Installation of up to 400MW of Battery Energy Storage Systems and associated infrastructure for a temporary period of 35 years. Land to the North of Church Road, Wicken, Ref 25/00303/FUM. Amended details received 10.2.26 Water Storage Tand details and Site Layout Plans and covering email re: amendments and clarification on drainage, biodiversity, emergency access.

The biodiversity information could not be found on the notification. The Parish Council agreed to strongly object and to resubmit its comments from the original application.

8.4 Update on Planning Applications Approved/Refused by ECDC

Approved

- Tree work 19 High Street, Wicken. Ref 26/00113/TRE

Withdrawn

- Peatland restoration at Wicken Fen. Howes Bank, Wicken Ref 24/00362/FUL

9. Neighbourhood Plan Update

The call for sites had taken place with a closing date of 30 April 2026. A further meeting of the Working Group was required.

10. Neighbourhood Plan Consultant Tender

The clerk had contacted a number of Neighbourhood Plan consultants inviting them to tender for the remaining work. The specification had been sent out.

Company	Response	Amount
Neighbourhood-plan.co.uk	Already have 3 this year. Unable to take further work	
James Bailey Planning	Unable to quote due to workload. Suggested DAC Planning	
DAC Planning	Unable to quote due to workload	
Parker Planning Ltd	Bought out by Meadows	
Meadows	Unable to quote due to workload	
Places4People		£12710 plus vat Plus, probable screening for environmental and habitat assessment. Cost unknown but could be in excess of £6k

Places4People was proposed by Cllr Barnes and seconded by Cllr Hawes. All were in favour with the exception of Cllr Rash who asked for it to be minuted that he was not in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Houghton left the meeting at 8.45pm

Cllr Barnes was proposed as chair for item 11 by Cllr Hawes and seconded by Cllr Robinson. All were in favour.

11. Changing Room on the Recreation Ground – Submissions of Tenders for Approval

Tenders had been sent out and three had been received back. All of these were much higher than expected.

It was agreed that the tender period should be extended and the tenders sent to additional builders.

Cllr Robinson will investigate which grants can be applied for. The clerk will talk to Soham Town Rangers Football Club about the grants they received.

This will be on the April agenda.

Cllr Houghton returned to the meeting at 9.05pm and took back the role of chair.

12. Consideration of the Position of Village Handyperson

Cllr Rash had suggested a village handyperson as a volunteer or a paid role and asked for this to be on the March agenda.

There are a number of village jobs which the clerk was currently doing which were not part of the clerk role and a number of small and ongoing maintenance jobs which needed to be completed on a regular basis. There were also a number of projects for example painting of the cemetery railings which could be completed by a village handyperson. The Almshouses and Village Hall Trustees also had maintenance jobs which could be completed by a handyperson. Cllrs Rash and Barnes would look to draw up a job description, and this would be discussed further at the April meeting.

13. Financial Matters

13.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages March 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 March 2026	£72.12
RH Landscapes	Clearing brambles behind the pavilion	£960.00
RH Landscapes	Flailing of the Recreation Ground hedge	£540.00
Wave	Water form 3.12.25 to 2.3.26 Recreation Ground	£23.13
Wave	Water form 3.12.25 to 2.3.26 Butts Lane	£15.57
Wave	Water form 3.12.25 to 2.3.26 Cemetery	£18.09
SSE	1.2.26-28.2.26	£53.92
Currys	Laptop for Clerk. Card payment	£329.00

The clerk was currently preparing for the end of year audit and the following needed to be noted.

Name	Reason for noting	Amount
SB Ibran	Plastic grids for footpath. Cost noted in minutes during discussion but not listed in bill payments (September 2025)	£435
T Smith	Refund of grave fee as paid by the undertaken and T Smith (August 2025)	£200
HMCTS	Discussed but not listed in bill payments. Card payment for Court Fees (July 2025)	£35.00
Mission Hall rent	Missed from bill payments (July 2025)	£90.00
British Gas Lute	Miss from bill payments (July 2025)	£20.83
R James	April Wages listed at £680.03 and PAYE as £173.60 Should be £680.23 and £173.40	
R James	June wages listed as £680.03 should be £680.23	
Nest	Listed as £2 should be £15.11	

13.2 Monthly Finance update

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

13.3 Bank Reconciliation to 27 February 2026

This had been circulated and noted.

14. Policies for Approval

14.1 Accessibility Statement

Approval of the Accessibility Statement was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Robinson. All were in favour.

21. Items for Information

Cllr Barnes advised that unsolicited parking in the Village Hall car park was becoming an issue. This would be on the April agenda.

Cllr Barnes asked to use the marquees and the village greens for the fete on 13 June 2026. This was granted.

Cllr Rash asked about the Methodist Chapel parking and raised the question of whether they could park in the Almshouses car park. The main issue was Monday evenings when the youth band used the Methodist Chapel however they had now moved practice nights to Wednesdays at the village hall so this should no longer be an issue.

There had been a number of burglaries and attempted burglaries in the village. Cllr Houghton would put a post on Facebook about Ecops.

There were no further business and the meeting closed at 9.45pm

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