

WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING HELD AT 19:30 HRS ON TUESDAY 13 AUGUST 2024
WICKEN MISSION HALL

In Attendance (a minimum of 3 Councillors must be present for business to be conducted):
B Pepper (Chair), L Houghton, R Barnes, M Hawes, P Rash, C Robinson, S Wilson and J Rogers,
District Councillor Vellacott and 3 parishioners.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillor S Hill and County Councillor B Hunt.

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 were no requests to speak.

The agenda was taken out of order to allow for the reports from the County and District Councillors, the requests from the Upware Residents Association and Wicken Amateurs Football Club to be heard earlier than stated on the agenda.

21. Request from the Upware Residents Association to Purchase a New Bench Using the Ringfenced CIL Money

The URA requested an additional bench using the CIL money which was ringfenced when the Open Space project started. The purchase of the bench was proposed by Cllr Houghton and seconded by Cllr Barnes. All were in favour.

22. Request from Upware Residents Association to have the Open Space Weeded and Seeded.

The URA had requested the front section from the entrance to the orchard be weeded and seeded with grass. The work would include spraying the area, cultivating and removing/burying the stones and reseeded. The URA had obtained the following estimates:

RH Landscapes	£2640 (including VAT)
Cambridge Groundcare	£3213.00
CT Contracting	£3309.87
Ely Lawn Care	£5213.39

Cllr Houghton proposed that the work be completed by RH Landscapes. This was seconded by Cllr Wilson. All were in favour.

Gwyneth Griffiths from the URA left the meeting at 7.45pm

11. Request for Additional Cuts of the Football Pitch

Wicken Amateurs Football Club had been promoted twice recently which had led to more pre-season matches which took place in June, July and August. The football club would therefore like to work with the Parish Council to review the grass cutting contract when it went for tender in the Autumn. Additional cuts had been needed in July and August to ensure the pitch was playable and the football club requested that the football pitch was cut twice in August to maintain the short grass without getting to much standing grass. The additional cut was agreed. It was noted that the football club had agreed to pay half of the cost for the additional cut and collection of grass on 2 August 2024.

7. County and District Councillors Reports

Cllr Vellacott reported on the following:

- The ECDC Planning Committee had approved the planning application to build a new medical centre in Soham. The Eastern Gateway had also been approved.
- The detail of the new waste service would be discussed at Committee on Monday 23rd September, and finalised by Council on Thursday 17th October. It would include black wheelie bins and incentives to boost recycling rates across the district.
- Three duck warning signs would be erected on Brook St and Soham High Street, and Soham Town Council had purchased a MVAS Sign, which should help reduce both speeding and duck fatality rates.
- Wicken had been included in the CPCA's demand responsive transport zone. The next CPCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be held on the 12th of September 2024
- Wicken bus situation was discussed at ECDC Full Council on 25th July. Also discussed were the new Corporate Priorities. ECDC continued to commit to the lowest possible Council Tax with no cuts to services, contributing to the planned bus delivery reforms (i.e.: how routes are run, such as by franchising etc.), opposing road charging and boosting ecology. It can be viewed on the East Cambs website.
- Wicken Parish Council would need to consider planning as ECDC would soon be working on a new Local Plan and the Government would be increasing the housing target by 12%.

Cllrs Vellacott and Hunt left the meeting at 8.30pm

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9 July 2024

There was one amendment required to the minutes which was to note that Cllr Hunt had not attended the meeting. With this amendment the minutes were agreed as a true and correct copy and signed by the Chair.

5. Progress Report on Matters Arising from the Minutes 9 July 2024

5.1 Mission Hall BT manhole – A barrier had been placed around the manhole cover by BT, but work could take up to 8 months. Cllr Houghton had sent a strongly worded email to the CEO of BT.

5.2 Allotment access road and Maltings footpath– Cllr Rash had completed the work on the allotment access road and had also repaired the holes which had formed on the Maids Head Green track. Cllr Rash would complete the work on the Maltings footpath.

5.3 Repair of Village Sign –This was ongoing.

5.4 Repair of the Church Wall – Work would take place in August.

5.5 Hawes Lane culvert –This would be looked at when the brambles had died back.

5.6 Pond Green Posts – Les Yardy would complete the work as requested. Posts in front of the pond would be installed after the pond maintenance had taken place.

5.7 Cleaning of Parish Benches – Work would take place on 7 September 2024

5.8 Pond Green Pay Equipment Insurance Quote – The replacement equipment would be installed w/c 14 October 2024.

5.9 St Andrews Primary School Admissions – this was still being dealt with by the School Adjudicator.

5.10 Plaque for the Kings Oak – This had been ordered. [Clerk’s note – this was now in place].

5.11 Parking on North Street – This had been discussed on social media. The Hall Committee had contacted the Youth Band and offered the use of the car park until September. The clerk would include a request in the Around and About that people use their off-street parking if possible.

6. Planning Matters

6.1 Installation of a balcony at the rear of 14 Upware Road. Ref 24/00611/FUL

The Parish Council had no concerns.

6.2 **Single storey front extension and alterations to existing conservatory. Fenway’s, 11 Lode Lane, Wicken. Ref 24/00581/Ful**

The Parish Council had no concerns.

6.3 Updates on Planning Application Approve/Refused by ECDC

There were no updates.

8. Neighbourhood Plan

It was proposed by Cllr Houghton that Wicken Parish would complete a Neighbourhood Plan. This was seconded by Cllr Rogers. All were in favour. The clerk would ask for volunteers to join the committee in the Around and About.

9. Hedge Adjacent to the Mission Hall Car Park

A response had been received from the homeowner. This would be logged as a boundary dispute.

10. Review and Approval of the Financial Regulations

Approval of the Financial Regulations was proposed by Cllr Rogers and seconded by Cllr Barnes. All were in favour.

12. Changing Rooms Design for Approval

The Recreation Committee had met with Dan Hardingham to review the plans, and these were slightly amended around the disabled access. The updated plans were reviewed and approved by the Parish Council.

13. Recreation Management Committee Future and Decision Whether to Bring Back to Parish Council Control.

The number of members of the Recreation Management Committee had declined over the years and work now fell to a few committee members and the Chair in particular. It was agreed that the committee should continue to manage the Recreation Ground. Paul Bullman agreed to join the committee to represent Wicken Amateurs FC.

14. Pond Maintenance

A quote had been received from HE Services for a 22-tonne excavator(operated) at £51.95 per hour (minimum 9 hours) with delivery of £87.50 each way. The clerk would need to obtain quotes for muck away as HE Services did not provide this service. This would be on the September agenda.

15. Wicken Lode Maintenance and Update form the Meeting with Wicken Fen

Cllrs Houghton and Pepper had met with Alan Kell from Wicken Fen and the following was discussed and agreed:

- Due to mechanical faults/loss of equipment NT (National Trust) were unable to carry out the annual mow of the strip of vegetation between the path and Wicken Lode in 23/24. NT would undertake this in Autumn 2024 and continue the annual cutting in the future.
- NT would widen the ongoing mowing of the path margins between the visitor centre and Normans bridge, as the Parish Council had expressed concern on the narrow-mown margins which were creating a pinch point at the busiest length of footpath. AK agreed a wider margin is required.
- NT would insert and maintain 4 fishing access points through the year along the stretch up to Normans Bridge.
- The Parish Council would contact the EA to set up a 3-way meeting to discuss Lode management/de-silting of Wicken Lode, from Normans Bridge down to the Visitor Centre.
- The Parish Council expressed concern regarding access to water's edge for boats/paddle boards. As this stretch of the lode was one of the most biodiversity rich and within the SAC designation, NT would continue to ask visitors who enquire, if they were happy to

enter at Normans Bridge, to reduce the potential disturbance and impact to breeding birds, aquatic biodiversity and the water quality, but acknowledge not everyone would wish to do so. It was also noted that Wicken residents have navigational rights along this particular stretch of Lode as defined under Item 26 of the EA Recreational Byelaws.

- AK acknowledged the approach by some NT staff towards parishioners had been officious and would be toned down.

The annual meeting with Wicken Fen would take place on Wednesday 28 August 2024.

16. Parish Grass Cutting

This would be on the September agenda.

17. Allotment Committee Minutes and Actions

The Allotment Committee had met on the 3 July 2024 at the Butts Lane Allotments. The minutes were agreed as a true and correct copy and signed by the Chair.

Updates

- Cllr Pepper had enquired about reinforced grass matting for the turning area to form a foundation and the price was around £500. This would be on the September agenda.
- The clerk had written to the allotment holders of 1 and 2. Allotment 2 had been handed back to the Parish Council and would be re-let.
- It was agreed that the trees needed to be pruned and a maximum height of 7ft. The clerk would write to all allotment holders when the rent was due in October.
- Cllr Pepper had cut some of the brambles next to allotment number 7 to stop them from growing over the fence.
- Brambles on the footpath neighbouring the allotments had been cut back as part of the maintenance carried out by Roland Fletcher.

The Parish Council would like to thank Peter Few for maintaining the path between the allotments.

18. Purchase of Solar Panels for the Speedwatch Signs

The current batteries required recharging around every 2 weeks and was a difficult job to undertake. The cost of 2 60watt solar panels was £399 each plus delivery. The purchase of the panels was proposed by Cllr Hawes and seconded by Cllr Wilson. All were in favour. The Parish Council would like to thank Carl Shavitz for his work with Speedwatch.

19. Cemetery Railings Maintenance

The Railings had been painted last year but already required painting again. Cllr Pepper would complete a job spec, and the clerk would obtain quotes.

20. CCC Community Energy Action Plan

CCC had put together a Community Energy Action Plan. A number of Councillors would complete the survey.

23. Financial Matters

23.1 Bill payments

Rachel James	Clerk wages August 2024	£509.60
HMRC PAYE	PAYE August 2024	£127.40
RH Landscapes	Grass cutting July 2024 plus additional cut and collect on the Recreation Ground 2 August 2024	£1764.00
Roland Fletcher	2nd cut of footpaths	£811.20
Burwell Print Centre	March to May edition of Around and About	£203.58
Burwell Print Centre	30 entry forms for Wicken Horticultural Show (recharged)	£5.76
Burwell Print Centre	July to August edition of Around and About (part recharged)	£298.78
PKF Littlejohn	External auditor fee	£378.00
R James (Etsy)	Tree marker plaque	£16.80
R James (Amazon)	2 padlocks and chains	£23.92
SSE Energy*	Streetlight electricity 1.7.24 to 11.7.24	£83.62
SSE Energy*	Streetlight electricity June 2024	£228.08
SSE Energy	Streetlight electricity May 2024	£52.01
British Gas	Electric for the changing rooms 8 June 2024 to 8 July 2024	£16.72
British Gas	Electric for the changing rooms 8 July 2024 to 8 August 2024	£20.44
Community Heartbeat	Annual support for the defibrillator	£162.00

*The clerk advised that SSE had written to apologise about an admin error around the expiry of the 2-year fixed contract meaning the contract had moved to a variable rate. The clerk had fixed the rate for another 2 years, but the delay had seen a rise in electric costs for June.

23.2 Monthly Finance update

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

23.3 Bank Reconciliation to 30 July 2024

24. Items for Information

Cllr Houghton raised concerns regarding travellers and the rights of the Parish Council. The clerk would enquire if the Traveller Liaison Officer from ECDC could attend a meeting to advise.

The Parish Council would hold a coffee morning in October or November as this had been successful last year. Date to be confirmed.

Cllr Pepper advised that the Clerk and Chair had met with Mark Peck (footpaths officer from CCC) concerning the western arm of Byway 23. This required work in addition to the maintenance work to raise the canopy in some areas. Mark Peck would arrange for the work to be completed and paid for by CCC.

Cllr Pepper advised that the cycle path had been discussed with Mark Peck who informed him that the start date had been delayed with a possible start date of September 2024. Cllr Rash had been informed by Soham Town Council that the start date would be December 2024.

Cllr Pepper had attended the URA meeting in July and advised the following:

- The secretary had stepped down from the position, but the URA had been unable to fill the position at the meeting.
- There was bramble growth at the back of plot 1.
- There was a speeding issue along Old School Road but as there were no suitable poles the Speedwatch signs could not be used.
- No Mow May was not beneficial on the Open Space and the URA had asked that cuts continue in May.

The meeting closed at 10.30pm