

**MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
OF
WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL**

On Wednesday 2 September 2020

at 7.00 pm via Microsoft Teams

Action

84/20 Attendance and apologies

To receive and accept any apologies.

Cllr Neil Gordon-Lee – Chairman
Cllr Celina Francklin
Cllr Philip Ivens
Cllr Alan Cartwright
Cllr Andrew Edmondson
Cllr Marcus Rixon
Cllr Ian Howett
County & District Cllr Allen Walker – apologies received
District Cllr Dennis Loveland – apologies received
Valda Clapham - Clerk
Two members of the public

85/20 Members' interests

Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests in items on the agenda as required by the Wicken PC Code of Conduct for Members and by the Localism Act 2011.

Cllr Ivens declared an interest in item 91/20 (proposed Solar Farm) and in the provision of village maintenance.

86/20 Report from District and County Councillor

A written report from Cllr Walker had been circulated and copies were available for residents on request from the clerk.

87/20 Public forum

Fenlon Dunphy reported that work had started on the improvements to the Sports Club 50% of which the Solar Fund had agreed to fund.

He also advised Cllrs that the next issue of Wicken News was imminent.

88/20 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2020 – approved to be signed by the Chairman – and to note the Chairman's update which had been circulated to Cllrs.

Resolved

89/20 Number of councillors

To discuss the proposal to increase the number of councillors for Wicken.

The Chairman explained that prior to the elections being postponed a small number of residents had expressed interest in becoming a councillor. His proposal was to involve anyone interested on a committee or advisory group during the run up to the rescheduled elections, at which time if they wished to continue they would be

able to stand for election. This had the potential to increase diversity and bring in fresh ideas.

The proposal went on to suggest that increasing the number of councillors could allow all those interested to continue having a role and obviate the need for an election.

The clerk noted that an advisory group required less formality than a committee, but that in either case non-councillor members could not vote on Parish Council matters.

Cllrs generally were supportive of bringing in more diversity, for example improving the gender balance of the Council and committees as Cllr Francklin suggested, and fresh thinking but the majority felt that seven councillors was sufficient. Moreover, they were supportive of an election being required next time (there had not been an election in Wicken for many years) as this would give greater legitimacy to the Parish Council. They also felt it would be better for interested parties to become involved in existing village groups rather than creating any new ones.

The most appropriate such group was the Solar Fund Committee given that two existing members were likely to stand down. The Chairman agreed to approach those who had expressed interest with a view to their joining that Committee and then if they so wished standing as councillors when the election took place.

Chairman

90/20 Wicken streetlighting

Update on remedial action plan by E.ON

This had been completed and several residents had cut back trees and bushes to improve the effectiveness of the new lights. The concern about light disturbance for a resident of 15 Leckhampstead Road had not yet been resolved. An action plan is in place and the householder is being kept advised of progress.

Continuing action re light reflection onto 15 Leckhampstead Road

One possibility was a manufacturer's baffle at a cost of some £150, but the manufacturer had now suggested rotating the lenses so that the light fell only on the road. This would be cheaper and quicker. Cllrs agreed that the latter should be tried first, and if this did not resolve the issue for the resident then expenditure on the baffle was approved in advance.

Cllr Ivens queried what should happen if neither of these adjustments satisfied the resident. Other Cllrs felt that the views of other nearby residents (which were mixed) also needed to be taken into account. The Council has an equal duty to all residents and must reach a balanced view reflecting majority opinion

It was suggested that other residents' views should only be recognised if submitted in writing but on balance Cllrs felt that a conversation with a councillor subsequently reported to the Council should be sufficient. Any further discussion on the issue would, however, be deferred until the planned remedial actions had been implemented.

Evaluation of first phase and plans for second phase

Cllrs agreed that all residents should be invited to give feedback on the trial and to say whether they preferred modern or heritage for the remaining lights to be replaced. This would be done using a simple flyer/questionnaire to all residents – Cllr Francklin suggested that she and Cllr Edmondson might complete a draft prior to approval of the document by the Council. Cllr Cartwright offered to be involved in the drafting as required.

**Cllr Francklin
Cllr
Edmondson**

The suggested timescale was to have the flyer/questionnaire ready for distribution at the beginning of November, and then to give residents two weeks to respond. The Chairman recommended that residents should be left to decide for themselves whether they wished to respond and there should be no active campaigning for

views, which was generally supported.

A number of other issues were raised in the course of the discussion, including the possibility of brighter lights at certain key junctions, whether certain lights could at a later stage be moved to obtain the best result and both positive and negative views on the quality of light provided. It was acknowledged that it had not been possible for Cllrs to see the identical lights in operation prior to their decision, but that Cllrs had always followed the advice of experts and sought to satisfy the wishes of the majority of residents expressed at the public meeting. The Council had taken a decision and Cllrs needed to stand by that decision until fully implemented, at which time Council could consider if any further action was appropriate.

Finally, Cllr Cartwright reported that the significant reduction in electricity cost as a result of the new lights should be reflected in the next bill.

91/20 Proposed Solar Farm

To receive an update on proposed Solar Farm.

Various approaches to the planning authority and Elgin had not yielded definitive information but it was clear that there was a delay, possibly to enable a satisfactory traffic survey or possibly an environmental impact survey. Experience elsewhere also suggested that solar farm applications took a long time to get through planning. Cllr Ivens suggested construction was unlikely to start before the middle of 2021.

No action was required from the Council in the interim.

92/20 Planning

To discuss current planning issues and agree response.

Brook House – although it was not entirely clear the expectation was that similar materials would be used and there were no objections.

Parked car in Cross Tree Road – the Chairman's update noted that the car concerned had been permanently removed.

The clerk advised Cllrs that the sending of planning notices to neighbouring properties had restarted, and there was no longer a need to make these available on the village website.

93/20 Village Hall

To receive an update on the Village Hall tenancy and conversion to CIO.

The Chairman reported that Cllrs Ivens, Rixon and Howett had agreed to be trustees of the CIO allowing the lawyers to begin the application process. Some further questions had arisen and he would arrange a meeting with the trustees shortly to progress matters.

Chairman

Meanwhile the new tenant, Musication, had moved in. Remedial works were largely completed and looked really good. Council noted its appreciation of the efforts of various Cllrs in helping to get the Hall ready.

Professional advice would be sought regarding payment of insurance and business rates during the tenancy at will, and also on the deposit holding requirements under the formal lease to be set up once the CIO was in place. The clerk also advised that once the CIO was in place Village Hall matters should be discussed at trustee meetings rather than at Council.

Chairman

Responding to Cllr Rixon, Cllr Cartwright thought the letting agent's fee would not be due until the formal lease was in place.

94/20 Road condition and overhanging trees

To receive an update re road condition and overhanging trees and agree next steps.

There had been some cutting back of overhanging trees either as a result of Cllr Ivens' letter or as part of the streetlighting project.

Action was still needed at Cross Tree Cottage (it was hoped the new owner would do this) and at 22 Leckhampstead Road. The residents of the latter had obtained the necessary planning permission which meant that Cllrs Edmondson and Cartwright could go ahead with arranging the work.

**Cllr
Edmondson
Cllr Cartwright**

Cross Tree Cottage would be kept under review in case a new owner failed to materialise.

95/20 War Memorial

To receive an update on War Memorial and concern raised and agree next steps.

Planning permission had been granted and subsequently an application made to the Diocese to enable work on the plinth. Ideally the work would be completed in time for a rededication to mark the Memorial's centenary this October. With this in mind the Arch Deacon had been approached to expedite approval.

However, recognising that it might not be possible to meet the October deadline the suggestion of decorating the Memorial for the rededication with a separate wreath for each name had been mooted, and indeed might be acted upon in any event. Wreaths from the Royal British Legion would cost £20 each, residents being invited to sponsor a wreath via an article in the next Wicken News.

A revised estimate had been circulated to Cllrs showing an increased cost of £8300 plus VAT. The clerk suggested another quote be obtained and Cllr Edmondson provided details of another stonemason for Cllr Francklin to approach. It was hoped that funding would be available from the Solar Fund.

Cllr Francklin

The cleaning had been successfully completed. However, this had led to a resident's concern that his father's name and other World War II names had become less clear. The resident would be happy to contribute to the cost of any redefinition of the names but it was not yet clear what could be done. The stonemason had indicated that recutting of individual names might not look right.

Meanwhile the priority was to obtain Diocesan approval for the work on the plinth.

96/20 Speed monitor

To receive any data from speed monitor.

Cllr Cartwright reported that the speed monitor pole in Wicken Park Road had been mistakenly utilised for the road sign replaced following damage by a vehicle. The Highways Authority would provide a new pole in due course. Meanwhile Cllr Howett would re-site the monitor.

Cllr Howett

A further tranche of speed data would be available at the November meeting now that traffic volumes had increased.

Cllr Howett

97/20 Playground

To receive update on playground inspection and maintenance.

Cllr Edmondson reported progress on the issues identified by the last annual inspection:

- surface cleaning of the rubber tiles under the old equipment – cost would be £100 plus VAT but no date fixed yet for the work to be done
- installation of missing plastic plugs – these had been ordered

- installation of appropriate signage including how to report faults – awaiting quote for an appropriate sign providing clerk's contact details.

Additionally, after discussion with the Chairman and the Sports Club, Cllr Edmondson was proposing to cut back the branches overhanging the seating area, and he had still to agree the timing of this year's inspection (due in November).

**Cllr
Edmondson**

Finally, it was noted that only one of the laminated signs asking users to observe Covid precautions remained in situ. This would need to be replaced if it disappeared.

98/20 Covid – 19 Committee

To receive an update from the Covid – 19 Committee.

Only one request for assistance had been received since the previous meeting. However, the Committee would remain in place for the time being.

99/20 Website

To discuss Wicken website and agree any actions.

Cllr Francklin had suggested including an interactive page to allow residents to submit comments and ideas, but it was thought this might conflict with the Wicken Facebook page which was well used. A better solution would be to improve the linkage between the two – the Chairman to discuss with Richard Wiggins.

Chairman

100/20 Taxi service

To discuss restarting the village taxi service.

It was understood that the driver was ready to restart the village taxi service. Cllrs Francklin and Rixon agreed to check if previous users of the service were ready to recommence.

**Cllr Francklin
Cllr Rixon**

101/20 Noise nuisance

To discuss noise nuisance from cockerels.

Cllr Howett reported that Pound Close residents were regularly disturbed by the noise from two nearby cockerels. However, he had recently spoken with the cockerel owners and it was expected that the problem would shortly be resolved.

102/20 Finance

To receive and approve accounts and review budget for 2020/21

The Council approved payments since the previous meeting, as follows:

Resolved

		Amount
E.ON (to June 2020)	Online	499.05
E.ON (to June 2020)	Online	73.15
DNH Contracts (Jun)	Online	43.20
Wellers Law Group LLP	Online	354.00
W H Ivens & Son	Online	480.00
E.ON Energy Solutions	Online	9792.00
BHIB Ltd	Online	592.54

The clerk noted that the annual contribution to Wicken Village Community had not yet been paid pending a meeting of the Solar Fund Committee, and that funding for the lunches for vulnerable residents and necessary website updating also needed agreement. The Chairman agreed to encourage the Committee chairman to arrange a meeting.

Chairman

The clerk updated the Council on the approximate amount within the Fund currently and the outstanding items of approved expenditure.

The Chairman reported that he had reviewed the bank reconciliation against the underlying records and confirmed everything was in order.

103/20 Future meeting dates

Future meeting dates - 4 November 2020, and 13 January, 3 March and 19 May 2021.

The Chairman understood there was a preference for in person meetings and undertook to see if this was feasible for the next meeting.

Chairman

104/20 Items for the next meeting

The Chairman suggested the installation of interpretation boards promoting the village's history at appropriate locations, given the large number of walkers and cyclists passing through the village. He agreed to put together a proposal for the next meeting.

Chairman

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.56pm.

Chairman's Signature

Date

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