

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

On Wednesday 19 May 2021

at 7.30 pm in Wicken Church

Action

44/21 Attendance and apologies

To receive and accept any apologies.

Cllr Neil Gordon-Lee – Chair
Cllr Philip Ivens
Cllr Alan Cartwright
Cllr Ian Howett
Cllr Viv Kime
Valda Clapham - Clerk
Three members of the public

45/21 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 58/21 (Solar Farm) and in the provision of village maintenance. It was noted that there are now two Solar Farms impacting the village.

46/21 To elect a chair for 2021/22

Cllr Cartwright proposed that Cllr Gordon-Lee continue as Chair which was seconded by Cllr Howett and unanimously approved.

Resolved

47/21 To elect a vice chair for 2021/22

Cllr Gordon-Lee proposed that Cllr Cartwright continue as vice chair which was seconded by Cllr Howett and unanimously approved.

Resolved

48/21 To consider location for future meetings

The Chair explained that Wicken Church was able to hold up to 30 individuals whilst still complying with Covid regulations, which was why it had been chosen for tonight's meetings, and he would be asking the PCC secretary about future meetings whilst social distancing was in place. However, the intention was to move back to the Sports Club once the restrictions had ended.

Chair

It was understood that the PCC had refused payment for tonight's meetings but this could be reviewed if use of the Church continued.

49/21 Public forum

There were no further points raised by members of the public.

50/21 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 3 and 31 March 2021.

The minutes of the meetings held on 3 and 31 March (which had been agreed by the previous Council) were approved for signature by the Chair.

Resolved

51/21 To consider filling vacancies on the Council by co-option

The Council was legally obliged to fill the two vacancies by co-option on or before 25 June 2021 if suitable candidates were available. Cllrs were invited to consider and inform the Chair of any possible candidates so that the necessary co-option meeting could be held before the deadline.

Cllrs

Cllrs had mixed views on whether individuals who had been approached previously but not put themselves forward for election should be reconsidered, but this was not ruled out.

52/21 Policies and procedures

To consider, approve and adopt/readopt policies and procedures.

The clerk explained as follows:

- Financial Regulations had been amended to allow for the Chair to act as independent reviewer and to accommodate the bank's online payment approval process;
- Risk Assessment had been simplified in relation to Covid 19 to reflect the current rules; and
- Fixed Assets Register reflected the purchase of new streetlighting and decommissioning of the old lights.

The clerk also drew attention to an administrative error on the Fixed Assets Register, identified by the auditor, which should have included the cost of the Village Hall. Next year's Register would include the Village Hall and also its anticipated transfer out to the new Village Hall CIO.

The Financial Regulations (incorporating the updates proposed by the clerk), Code of Conduct (as adopted by the new West Northamptonshire Council), Standing Orders, Risk Assessment and Fixed Assets Register were approved and adopted/readopted.

Resolved

53/21 Internal audit report

To review the internal audit report and agree any actions necessary.

The clerk was pleased to report that the auditor had not identified any issues requiring attention this year.

54/21 Governance and accounting

To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21, the Accounting Statements 2020/21 and the Certificate of Exemption from external audit (both income and expenditure being below £25k for the year).

The clerk introduced the documents and explained that the Chair had reviewed and confirmed their accuracy.

All three documents were approved for signature by the Chair and clerk as necessary.

Resolved

55/21 To consider and approve documents for publication recommended by the Transparency working party

The Chair reiterated the Council's aim of full transparency, allowing anyone to see the Council's policies and procedures. He explained that the working party had taken advice from NCALC and focused first on those documents viewed as essential, which were listed in the agenda. Some of those were now ready for publication and had been circulated to Cllrs.

The Chair appreciated that Cllrs had not necessarily had time to read the detail prior to the meeting and invited them to review the documents and raise any concerns prior to or at the next meeting. Meanwhile he proposed that the documents be published on the website, accepting that they could be revisited if necessary and would in any case need to be reviewed from time to time.

He particularly drew attention to the Solar Farm subcommittee terms of reference as useful clarification where there had been some opacity before and which had been agreed with the chair of that subcommittee.

Cllr approved publication of the documents as proposed.

Resolved

The Chair reported that the website had been updated both to accommodate the policy documents and to provide a form on which residents could raise any concerns. Cllr Kime thought that a suggestion box in the pub would provide an easy way for residents to raise issues, and that posting the minutes of meetings on the noticeboard as well as on the website might also improve the level of engagement. Ideally issues and suggestions should not be anonymous in order that they could be properly followed up. Council agreed both these proposals.

**Cllr Kime
Clerk**

56/21 Finance

To receive and approve accounts, assess actual expenditure against budget and agree annual contributions to village organisations.

Resolved

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

			Amount
22-Mar	Online	DNH Contracts (Feb) V M Clapham	43.20
22-Mar	Online	(Questionnaire printing and postage)	78.40
19-Apr	Online	DNH Contracts (Mar)	43.20
19-Apr	Online	E.ON (to March 2021)	243.30
19-Apr	Online	E.ON (to March 2021)	73.15
19-Apr	Online	NCALC annual sub	431.99
10-May	Direct debit	ICO	35.00

The clerk updated Cllrs on various matters:

- the electricity maintenance charge had still to be adjusted for the new lighting;
- the process of changing online signatories was in hand, meanwhile there were several outstanding invoices;
- the CIL money remained available to be allocated to the playground access work and/or further new lighting;
- there was limited provision for legal fees in the Council's insurance policy, and Cllr Howett's idea for a fighting fund would need to be considered with the next year's budget; and
- there was provision in this year's budget for Cllrs to attend suitable training course if they so wished.

Cllrs considered the annual contributions to be made to village organisations and, proposed by Cllr Ivens and seconded by Cllr Cartwright, unanimously approved these in the same amounts as the previous year, being:

Resolved

	£	
Wicken Village Community	800	Funded from Solar Farm
Wicken Sports Club (re grass cutting)	500	
Wicken PCC (re grass cutting around the war memorial)	500	

Clerk

The clerk was asked to arrange payment.

57/21 Streetlighting

To receive an update on streetlighting renewal.

The Chair observed that work was in hand to obtain a revised cost reflecting the recommendations from the extraordinary meeting in March and taking account of the cost of re-siting certain lights and any staging of the work. In view of the elapse of time three new tenders would be obtained to ensure appropriate value for money and the agreed cost and preferred supplier would then be publicised. Cllr Cartwright indicated that he was making good progress with this.

It was noted that those residents directly impacted by the proposed new lights had still to be consulted re the need for any adaptations, and there had already been a concern raised in relation to the light at Rectory corner.

58/21 Solar Farm

To receive an update

The second solar farm had now received planning approval although it was not expected to become operational until the following year.

The Chair thought it important that villagers understood that no funds would be received from the developer until the farm came on stream.

59/21 Planning

To discuss current planning issues and agree any action.

8 Leckhampstead Road – this application concerned the redevelopment of an old farm building into an annexe to accommodate an elderly relative of the property owner. The neighbouring resident, Fenlon Dunphy, explained that he was supportive of rescuing the building and accepted it was an attractive design and made use of appropriate materials. However, he had two concerns, that the majority of the windows closely overlooked his own property and to ensure that vehicular access was restricted to prevent subsequent use as a separate dwelling.

Cllrs were receptive to these concerns. It was thought that the planners had wished to preserve the original look of the building from the farmhouse side through the positioning of the glazing, although the building itself was not listed.

Cllr Ivens suggested Cllrs might wish to visit the site before the Council made its response and, given the imminence of the consultation deadline, the clerk was asked to arrange an extension until 6 June.

Clerk

41 Leckhampstead Road – Council had already made representations about the lack of consultation regarding the change to village confines but the planning application had nevertheless been approved. There was now a second application for a detached garage on the same site, and this too was likely to be approved. The Chair proposed that Council object as before on the basis the change to confines was still under dispute, and hoped that this might open up the opportunity to discuss Council's concerns with the new CEO of West Northamptonshire Council. It was thought that the various developer letters sent to residents recently probably stemmed from these same disputed boundary changes.

The Chair agreed to draft a proposed response and circulate to Cllrs for comment. **Chair**

Land along Deanshanger Road – Cllr Ivens explained that the fencing off of part of this land was purely speculative. Every so often landowners were invited to suggest parcels of land for possible future development but this had no impact on the character of the land and the site in question remained agricultural land and outside the village confines.

60/21 To discuss submissions for proposed Wicken logo

The intention was to incorporate the logo in letter headings and on the website, but the competition in Wicken News had yielded few entries which perhaps indicated a lack of appetite for a logo.

Cllrs would have welcomed a better response and did not think any of the suggested logos fully satisfied the requirements. Council might revisit the idea of a Wicken logo at a later date.

61/21 Road condition

To receive an update re road condition.

Cllr Cartwright reported that work to repaint white lines was in hand and should be completed by October.

It was noted that potholes in Deanshanger Road, Church close and at the A422 junction had all worsened, and posed a particular threat to the many cyclists passing through the village. Cllr Cartwright agreed to review all those within the village and report those meeting the size criteria for repair on Street Doctor.

Cllr Cartwright

Cllr Ivens reported that the maintenance of verges in the village had been delayed because of illness and he proposed to ask the commercial contractor used by the County Council to do the work in place of his own contractor. The cost would be comparable and Cllrs confirmed this was appropriate in the circumstances.

62/21 War Memorial

To receive an update on War Memorial.

Some preliminary work had been done on the plinth whilst the delivery of stone was awaited. Meanwhile the wreaths from the rededication had been removed and retained for possible re-installation.

63/21 Flood risk and river clearance

To receive an update on flood risk and river clearance and agree any action.

Cllr Ivens would be reviewing the state of the brook on his land and would speak to Andrew Edmondson about the other side of the road where the brook probably needed digging out again. A particular need to look at the two road bridges had already been identified, and it was hoped any necessary work could be undertaken now the land had dried out as and when the farmers' schedules allowed. The Parish Council was willing to help as necessary.

Cllr Ivens

It was noted that the new resident at Heriot House had cleaned up the bank on his land.

64/21 To receive data from speed monitor

Cllr Howett had circulated the most recent data prior to the meeting which showed no evidence of an increased problem. The monitor had now been moved to Pound Close.

A concern at the speed of cyclists had been raised at the previous meeting, who seemed to regard the speed monitor as a challenge. However, unless they

actually exceeded the limit there was nothing the Council could do.

65/21 School traffic

To consider response to speeding school traffic on Wicken Park Road and resident complaint about traffic not giving way.

Resident concerns about the speed of school traffic had resurfaced now the school had reopened, with drivers seemingly regarding the speed limit as a minimum rather than a maximum. However, the character of the road precluded the use of a speed gun.

There had also been concerns raised at drivers coming out of the school turn without giving way to traffic on Wicken Park Road. This might be partially due to the white lines at the junction being rather worn and Cllr Cartwright offered to check who was responsible for repainting them.

Cllr Cartwright

The Council might consider writing to the school again but the Chair suggested this would be more effective if there were contemporaneous written evidence, and invited Cllr Cartwright to ask any complainants to put their concerns in writing.

Cllr Cartwright

66/21 Playground

To consider any action required re playground maintenance.

The clerk was asked to check the current status with former Cllr Edmondson including the proposal to improve disabled access. Council would then need to appoint one of their number to take over responsibility.

Clerk

67/21 To consider membership of CPRE

The document circulated to Cllrs explained the benefits of membership which cost £36 pa, the most relevant being support on planning issues. Cllrs approved membership on a trial basis and asked the clerk to make the necessary arrangements.

Clerk

68/21 Future meeting dates

Future meeting dates - 7 July, 1 September and 3 November 2021, and 12 January, 2 March and 4 May 2022.

The Chair asked Cllrs to give advance notice of absence to avoid the risk of being inquorate now there were only five Cllrs.

69/21 Items for the next meeting

Cllr Howett suggested dog bins.

Clerk

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Chairman's Signature

Date

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