

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
OF  
WICKEN PARISH COUNCIL  
On Wednesday 2 March 2022  
At 7:00 pm in Wicken Sports Club

**16/22 Attendance and apologies**

To receive and accept any apologies.

- Cllr Neil Gordon-Lee – Chair
- Cllr Alan Cartwright – apologies received
- Cllr Philip Ivens
- Cllr Ian Howett
- Cllr Viv Kime
- Cllr Petra Spencer-Jones
- Cllr Verity Robinson – apologies received
- Cllr Ken Pritchard – apologies received
- Cllr Ian McCord
- Hazel Dunphy - Clerk
- One member of the public

**17/22 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 Gordon-Lee declared a conflict of interest in an application for conservation area consent for the removal of three garden trees at his home and informed the meeting that he would absent himself if the councillors deemed it necessary. All agreed it was not necessary.

**18/22 To receive a report from County Councillor**

In the absence of Cllr Pritchard, Cllr Ian McCord was present and gave updates on:  
WNC Budget: This was passed in full so our Council Tax bills will be appearing soon. Green Waste Bin charges are to stand at £42 pa from April 1<sup>st</sup>. Amendments to remove the charge by Cllr McCord was unfortunately defeated. Residents who are in possession of green bins need to sign up for them on the WNC website  
Housing issues: On the question of new housing proposals, the number of responses to the consultation were encouraging. For example, there were 442 responses relating to the 6,000 houses at Old Stratford/Deanshanger, A5/A508. Overall, there was substantial support for Northampton as a location for growth. The potential for Northampton to take more seems to be borne out in the replies. Cllr McCord does however remind us that this is still very early, but encouraging.

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Bus Service: Cllr Ian McCord has been in touch with Britannia Bus to try to get an improved service and he is hopeful that there will be additional services added in the next few weeks. If, and when confirmed, Cllr McCord will advise the PC and others to try to get this service to its pre covid service. Unfortunately, this does not affect Wicken, but as from the beginning of next month there should be an improved, increased service, from Deanshanger/Cosgrove/Yardley Gobion and Potterspury

Fly Tipping: Cllr McCloud has been in contact with waste services to have various fly tips removed in Cosgrove and the Bridleway in Ashton. Cllr Howett did point out however, that Street Doctor, although brilliant, did not have a feature to report fly tipping. Cllr McCord recommended using the app, What Three Words, to pinpoint the location and to report the location to the depo. Cllr Ivens mentioned that previous fly tipping issues in Wicken were solved by taking photographs and reporting them to the council. Cllr Gordon-Lee pointed out that an official record of the fly tipping would be preferable through Street Doctor.

**Cllr Howett to follow up.**

**19/22          Public Forum**

Mr Dunphy, chair of the Sports Club, spoke at the meeting and informed the Cllrs that some residents thought the Sports Club was looking tired and required a facelift. However, funds currently were being allocated to urgent needs such as, replacement of the boiler, replumbing, rewiring, reguttering, kitchen hob replacement and roof repairs – structural rather than visual improvements. Cllr Ivens asked if the sports club was financially sound, and Mr Dunphy confirmed that they were.

Mr Dunphy, chair of the WVC, reported that purchasing new village notice boards would be prohibitive so an estimate for the cost of refurbishing both village boards was sought. The cost of £550 will be covered by the WVC. The Cllrs raised no objection to this proposal. As one of the boards was planted in a garden, a suggestion was made to remove it from there and place it just outside the boundary of the house. Cllr Gordon-Lee suggested that a written letter to the occupier of the house should be sent explaining their intentions and asking them to contact the freeholder for confirmation. Cllr Gordon-Lee also suggested that Mr Dunphy considers the possibility of having lockable notice boards to protect the statutory documents from being covered by other sundry documents, but this was not met with consensus approval due to the boards becoming less user friendly.

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However, it was agreed that a catch would be placed on the glass covers to prevent them from opening in high winds, as had been the case recently.

**20/22 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 were approved for signature by the Chair

**21/22 Items of Standing Information**

- Streetlighting  
In the absence of Cllr Cartwright, Cllr Gordon-Lee updated Cllrs on the timing issues of streetlighting. It was not yet clear as to what governed their operation, and it was agreed that the manufacturer needed to explain what was going on as there seemed to be discrepancies in their operation. An update would ensue.
- Solar Farm  
Cllr Ivens informed the meeting that Scottish Power has bought the solar farm on Wicken Park Road but as they have several (17) projects to fulfil, the process is going to be slow, and he expects the start date to be in January 2023 and no money will therefore be forthcoming until the end of that year.

The construction of the solar farm in Leckhampstead necessitated the need for permission to be gained from West Northants Council to allow access to the site from Wicken Park Road.

Nothing else was raised on other standing items.

**22/23 Finance – to receive and approve accounts, review actual expenditure against budget**

Budget/Forecast/Variance was sent out to all Cllrs. The clerk reported that there was nothing significant to report from the previous month and as the forecasted expenditure for streetlights had not yet taken place, it had been delayed to the following month.

Cllr Gordon-Lee reminded those present that energy costs would be increasing dramatically in the future and that we would have to find more money out of the

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budget to cover that cost. The clerk also added that a significant Vat reclaim will be due on the capital cost of the streetlights.

**23/22 Policy Review**

Cllr Gordon-Lee Informed the meeting that we should have reviewed two of the Council policies at the January meeting, but this was overlooked. Neither policy needed any specific change and if agreed by the Councillors then we would reset the review date for January 2023.

The meeting agreed to continue with the policies in their current form until the next review

**24/22 Current Planning Issues**

Cllr Gordon-Lee reminded the meeting of his declaration of a conflict of interest due to a current planning application relating to his property.

A comment was raised about the inconsistency of receipt of planning applications from the council.

**25/22 Traffic Incident on Deanshanger Road**

A new speed monitor pole was purchased for Deanshanger Road to place it in better line of view. Andrew Edmondson offered to install it.

Cllr Gordon-Lee contacted the police about the removal of the crash debris which is being actioned by SNC.

Cllr Gordon-Lee informed the meeting that Cllr Cartwright had agreed with Thames Valley police an action plan when a major accident happens on the A422, to direct traffic away from the villages. The plan seemed to have failed during the recent (Monday 28 Feb 2022) major traffic accident on the said road. This meant that Wicken and surrounding villages suffered from severe verge damage and resulting mud on the roads. This was felt to be unacceptable but acknowledged that guiding traffic away from the villages may not always be possible, so a one-way system might be preferable to enable traffic to flow through and not become gridlocked. It was also highlighted that some cabling was exposed as a result of the verge damage, but it appears that nothing can be done until the cable fails. This emphasises the necessity for an alternative plan to be in place to mitigate such damage. Cllr Gordon-Lee was in touch with WNC to clean the roads, but this had not happened by the time the meeting was held.

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**26/22 Northants CALC Asset Mapping**

Cllrs Gordon-Lee, Ivens and Robinson are working together on this project and have registered Wicken for Asset Mapping on Parish-on-line. It is free for the first 6 months, plus the month of registration, but then the cost payable via the precept monies received will be £50 pa for a village of Wicken's size. Cllr Gordon-Lee did ask the surrounding villages if and how they were using the online register and how they were finding it. Potterspury was sceptical initially but have since found it useful as it was a record of the assets they have as well as mapping which grass needed cutting and getting quotes for. Cllr Gordon-Lee suggested that once all the assets were identified they would seek the advice of Cllr Ivens to ensure that everything was included and was legitimately PC assets. Cllr Howett pointed out that there is a question about the ownership of the footpath beside the bridge and that it could be a PC asset.

**27/22 Playground maintenance**

Cllr Spencer-Jones informed that no inspection had yet taken place but that she was given details of a playground-maintenance contact. Cllr Gordon-Lee requested that the quote needs to be presented at the next meeting and if the cost is considered substantial more quotes would be necessary before a decision is made. Cllr Howett informed that the tree was cut back from the playground by two metres.

**28/22 Summer Fete 25/06/2022**

Cllr Kime, Fenlon Dunphy and Angus Forsyth had a useful meeting last night. Reported that they have secured 15 stall holders to be present but hope to find 4 more to join. They secured a good number of volunteers. Discussions covered marquees and positioning of stalls. A follow up meeting will be arranged for a Sunday afternoon at 16:30 hrs so that they can visually assign locations for the stalls and marquee. Cllr Gordon-Lee brought up the issue of Public Liability Insurance for the fete and he proposed that the PC pick up the bill, allocated from public funds as he felt it was appropriate, but reminded that estimates should be requested if the cost were to exceed £100. This was the only item of expenditure that the PC agreed to support. Cllr Kime informed that the cost for the presence of St John's ambulance would be covered by fete income.

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Resolved: The Council agreed to cover fete expenses for public liability insurance up to the value of £100.00

**29/22          New Clerk**

NCALC advertisements placed for the position of a new PC clerk returned no interest. Cllr Gordon-Lee suspects the village may be too small to attract outside interest for the benefit received, so urged the Cllrs to see if they could persuade someone in the village to accept the position.

**30/22          Trees**

WNC had asked for comments on their tree strategy. Cllr Gordon-Lee reported back that the government had done a consultation and completed a thorough report and strategy which could easily be implemented by WNC. Cllr Gordon-Lee has not yet received a reply to his comment but will let the PC know when one is received. He felt that there was no need to do a lot of work on it as it had already been done. The precarious Beech tree on Deanshanger road was mentioned.

**Cllr Ivens to talk to Jonathan Gurney and report back.**

**31/22          Dog Fouling**

Dog fouling is continuing to be an issue in Wicken, where some dog owners are not being responsible for picking up their dog mess. A suggestion was made to name and shame, but it was agreed that a leaflet would be sent out highlighting that it is a finable offence to leave one's dog mess anywhere in the village and that includes the privately owned sports field which is used by children as well as adults. It was also suggested that the note should cover that the poo bin was only for fouling when out, walking one's dog, and not for home fouling deposits. Approval of all Cllrs for the wording to be used will be sought before printing.

Resolved: to print and distribute a flyer on dog fouling to all houses within the village

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**32/22 Western Power Cabling of Leckhampstead**

In Cllr Cartwright's absence, Cllr Gordon-Lee informed the meeting that Western Power cables on Leckhampstead road would not be underground but overground. In discussion with the Western Power about tree trimming by the Gospel Elm it was suggested that this would be unnecessary if the cabling was routed underground. It was suggested by the Western Power staff member that this was scheduled for the next two years. A subsequent conversation by Cllr Cartwright with a different contact confirmed that this was incorrect.

Mention was made of the dates Gigaclear were working in Wicken to supply their cables. A list will be put on the notice boards and the website. Cllr Howett pointed out that road closed signs should be removed when work was completed as this could encourage non observance when necessary and could be dangerous.

**Cllr Gordon-Lee agreed to follow up**

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**33/22 Notice of future meetings - 2022**

- May 4
- July 6
- Sept 7
- Nov 2

**34/22 Items for next meeting**

Nothing was raised so the meeting was closed at 20:15

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