

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

On Tuesday 7th January 2014

In The Sports Club, Wicken at 7.00 pm

**followed by a presentation by Harry Shepherd-Cross and discussion of the Solar Farm Planning
Application**

01/14 Attendance and apologies; To receive and accept any apologies.

Cllr. Philip Ivens - Chairman

Cllr. Lynda Clark **will arrive late, Apologies accepted**

Cllr. Richard Edmondson

Cllr. Celina Franklin

Cllr. Gerarde Maloney **Apologies accepted,**

Cllr. Jef Williams,

Cllr. Alan Cartwright

Ruth Millard - Clerk

In attendance;

County & District Cllr Allen Walker, **Apologies accepted**

Dist. Cllr. David Aaronson,

Public 28

The Chairman explained that Cllr Maloney was leaving the area and therefore is resigning from being a Parish Councillor.

02/14 Members Interests; For Members to declare and personal and/or prejudicial interests.

No interests were declared

03/14 Approval of Minutes; The members agreed the minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held at the Village Hall on Wednesday 4th September 2013, were correct and the Chairman signed them.

04/14 Co-option of Member; Due to Cllr Clapham being indisposed he would not be able to attend Parish Council Meetings in the future. Cllr Felina Franklin proposed that Alan Cartwright be co-opted on to the Parish Council. Cllr Richard Edmondson seconded and the Parish Council agreed the proposal. Cllr Alan Cartwright signed his declaration, the Clerk countersigned.

05/14 Matters arising.

- **Japanese Knotweed;** the Clerk had informed the local lead flooding Authority, Northampton County Council, giving them the grid reference where the Japanese Knotweed had been seen.
- **Inland Revenue;** the Clerk had been advised in an email from Tearle & Carver to pay the reduced rate, penalty in order to clear the account and get it up to date. A letter from HMRC had also been received that stated they could not reduce this amount further. The Chairman proposed to pay the invoice, Celina seconded and the Council agreed.
- **Leckhamstead Road Drains;** Cllr Alan Cartwright has spoken to Martin Smith/01604 883400/Design Manager on 7th January; He stressed that road should be renamed Leckhampstead stream, with clear damage occurring to road surface, plus recent jetting of drains is a waste of money. Martin confirmed the project is in the business plan for 2014/15, put in a few months ago, but still not definite as County will make the final decision on priorities in February. No need for detail plan/costing for approval process, the approximate budget is

Chairman's signature

enough he said. Martin felt we should be guardedly optimistic on outcome.

- **Woodland Trust, free tree offer;** the Clerk had attempted to order 30 free trees from the Woodland Trust and had sent in an email that she has been unable to download the form. She will follow up with another telephone call tomorrow.
- **Playground;** The Parish Council looked at the quote it has received from Wickstead Leisure. The Council discussed and agreed to speak to Wicken Toys for a quote on work needed on the play equipment, to compare with the quote from Wickstead Leisure. The Council also agreed to invite Wicken Toys to replace the equipment with some of their own and advertise the same.

Action; PI

06/14 Planning; No applications received.

07/14 Finance; The members were advised of payments of accounts.

Receipts up to 29th November 2013

Name	Reason	Amount
....1706	Interest – 09.10.2013	0.03
	Interest – 11.11.2013	0.03
		0.06

ACCOUNT BALANCE up to 29th November 2013

....1706	747.18
...8268	3282.49
TOTAL	4029.67

Invoices to be paid

Payee	POWER	Cheque Number	Amount
AH Contracts, Nov '13 & Dec'13	Litter (animal Droppings) Order 1991	000532	28.80
ER Millard, Nov & Dec Remunerations	LGA 1972 s111	000533	160.00
HMRC, Nov & Dec	LGA 1972 s111	000534	40.00
E.on, Lighting Maintenance, end Sept	LGA 1972 s14 para 28	000535	72.34
E.on, Lighting Maintenance, end Dec	LGA 1972 s14 para 28	000536	72.34
Wicken Conservation Society	LGA 1972 s137	000537	50.00
Wicken Sports Club	LGA 1972 s137	000538	300.00
Wicken PCC	LGA 1972 s137	000539	300.00
Budget and Precept; HMRC	LGA 1972 s112	000540	240.00
E.on Street Lighting	LGA 1972 s14 para 28	000541	188.12
			1451.60

Budget and Precept;

The Council considered any grants that it would be making in this financial year. The Parish Council agreed to grant £50.00 to Wicken Conservation Society. The Parish Council agreed to grant the PCC £300.00 toward the maintenance of the Churchyard. The Parish Council agreed to grant £300.00 to Wicken Sports Club toward the mowing cost. The clerk went through the Budget figures that she had prepared, with the Council. After a short discussion the Parish Council agreed a budget figure of £4268 at this present time. The Parish Council discussed the Precept and agreed to increase the Precept by 5% above last years request. Precept for 2014/15 is £4410.00

08/14 Reports;

County; There is nothing outstanding to report from NCC, we are just going through the Budget Scrutiny. Its probable that the 14/15 Council tax will rise by 1.99%.

District; South Northants Local Plan info on www.southnorthants.co.uk/1128.htm. This includes consultation documents and response forms. Closing date is 24th January. Council Tax Exemption scheme remains same as last year but as info from SNC stated the transition grant

given last year will not be available this financial year 14/15. Deanshanger PC are holding an exhibition in the Community Centre this Saturday 11th Jan between 10am and 2.00pm to highlight SNC Local Plan and allow public to see main points.

- **Police;** no report.
- **Neighbourhood Watch;** The neighbourhood Watch coordinator Sue Oswell reported that NHW now relies on Police Alerts, she has only received one since she has taken over the role. There will be a loose leaved letter to the residents in the next Wicken News, to explain the changes.

09/14 Correspondence Circulars and Consultations; the Council noted the following correspondence;
November 2013 Victim Support asking for a donation.
29.11.2013 Tearle & Carver, 2011_2012 Penalty Appeal.
December 2013 E-on, Industry Rules are Changing
December 2013 Wickstead Playscapes,
13.12.2013 SNC Flooding Advice.
16.12.2013 HMRC, 2011-2012 Late Filing Penalty.
19.12.2013 SNC, 2014-2015 Parish Precept

10/14 Open Forum: 10 minutes for Members and members of the public to raise questions, make comments; suggest future agenda items etc. Items requiring decisions must be included in the next agenda.

- The large recycling Bins that had been reinstated at the Sports Club were supposed to be emptied every other week, had not been emptied to date. **Action; AC**
- Cllr Edmondson proposed that the Parish Council try to get the speed of the traffic reduced on the A422, between the Deanshanger Roundabout and the Buckingham Roundabout. He suggested a speed limit of 50 mph. This did seem to be the limit on a large number of A roads in the area. The Parish Council agreed to look into it. **Action; AC**
- A member of the Public reiterated that the drains in Leckhampstead Road need to be attended to. The Chairman said that the problem was the tree roots in the growing through the drains. The Council were in contact with Northampton County Council. Hopefully they would be installing a new drainage system during 2014.

11/14 Date and time and venue of the next meeting; The next Parish Meeting will be held at the Village Hall, Wicken on Wednesday 5th March 2014 at 7.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.57.

The Chairman introduced Harry Shepherd-Cross to the meeting. He was to give an update of the Solar Farm he was hoping to have installed in at Wicken and as such the presentation was part of a consultation he was doing before submitting a planning application. After the presentation he would take any question. The Chairman asked that any questions went through the Chair so as to keep the meeting orderly.

Harry gave a short presentation of his plans to-date. Including a 106 Planning agreement to give the Parish of Wicken, through the Parish Council, ten thousand pounds a year for the life time of the Solar Farm. He asked for any questions.

Q. Why did you choose this area of land?

A. *The areas that a Solar Farm can be situated on are very limited. It has to connect to the grid. At the point of contact the line has to be 33 thousand KV. There is such a line running from Beachampton to Wicken sub-station. The company would have a reference map showing the line and would then choose a suitable area. Not to close to main roads to be seen, not in low lying areas where there could be floods etc. etc.*

Q. What is the Grade of land?

A. *Grade 3- good to moderate agricultural land.*

- Q. The questioner understood that Solar Farms should be only produced on Brownfield sites not agricultural land.
- A. *There are very few suitable brown field sites. In fact an analysis of the 23,000 sites on the brown field register only showed 21 of them to be large enough, with an available grid connection and suitable. The UK needs around 1,000 solar farm sites.*
- Q. Will it become a brown field site and how can we be sure it will be decommissioned?
- A. *It will definitely not be classified as brown field. It will have a time limited planning consent following which it will have to be decommissioned. The life of the Solar Panels are 25 -30 years. Usually sheep graze underneath them, when they are finished with it will just be a matter of pulling the stakes out of the ground and removing the metal. Then it is still agricultural land. The decommissioning will be a planning condition and supported by a sinking fund.*
- Q. How much does the Solar farm cost to produce.
- A. *15-18 Million to build and should generate 8-10% income.*
- Q. How long has the company been in existence?
- A. *1 year. But he had a previous company running for 6 years, installing Solar Panels on roofs until the government cut the subsidy and he started this company. Therefore you could say 7 years.*
- Q. Regarding the extra traffic entering and exiting an already well used road, during the initial siting of the solar panels?
- A. *There will be approximately 10 lorries a day bringing in the equipment at the peak of construction but a Traffic Management Plan will be developed to minimize any impact.*
- Q. Regarding the drainage needed.
- A. *Swales will be excavated to stop any run off water on to the roads.*
- Q. Regarding the type of screening.
- A. *Container grown hedging will be planted at double thickness. The government does not allow Conifers or Laurels to be planted, and the plants must be native.*
- Q. A resident said that the plants must be evergreen, it will be no good in the winter months to have a deciduous hedge to screen the solar farm from the neighbourhood.
- A. *Then the hedge will need to be Holly, Yew or Privet. (post meeting addition)*
- B. What are the colour of the panels.
- A. *The frames are a dull grey and the panels dark blue / black.*
- Q. When will you company be exiting this project.
- A. *We plan it, build it and make sure that it is working efficiently. We then sell it on to a Pension Fund. All our obligations will carry on with the new owners, who have a vested interest in getting a high revenue. At the end of the project, there is good recycling value in the panels and other equipment which are made of Aluminum, Steel and Copper.*
- Q. Given how technology has changed over the past 25 years, how do you know that the Solar Panels of today will stand the test of time?
- A. *They are warranted for 25 years by the manufacturers*
- Q. Looking at the road safety, would you be incorporating a slip-road at the entrance, for lorries during the construction and for maintenance at a later date.
- A. *Only if the Highway Authority ask for one. Maintenance of the panels is minimal and would not need lorries.*
- Q. What type of fencing will be erected?
- A. *8 feet high deer fencing. There will also be infra red cctv only triggered by a human heat signature.*
- Q. Would the contribution to Wicken be a fixed sum or index linked.
- A. *An initial sum of £10,000.00 each year for the lifetime of the project, given to Wicken Parish Council but index linked.*
- Q. If I wanted to sell my property, and am overlooking a Solar Farm would it devalue my property?
- A. *There is no noise, no smell, no lights and minimal vehicle movements in his experience he had not fund this to be the case. In deed if the grid capacity was taken up with the Solar Farm, it would protect the area from a Wind Farm being planned.*
- Q. Would Western Power not be able to increase the capacity of the grid.
- A. *To increase the capacity of the grid the cost would be so high to not make it sustainable.*
- Q. Ho does the energy get to the grid?
- A. *Underground cables.*
- Q. Would it be possible for Wicken to benefit from reduced cost electricity?
- A. *No. All of the energy has to go back to the grid. Also, the company we sell the electricity to will probably not be the same one that individuals buy their electricity from.*

- Q. Can you guarantee that there will not be any expansion at a later date?
- A. *The householder is protected by the planning system. If an application was detrimental to homes in the area, he could not see that the planning system would agree, especially if the worry was that a home could be surrounded by Solar Panels.*
- Q. If there was a need to upgrade the Solar Panels in the future, would it be necessary to reapply for planning permission?
- A. *Yes, probably. To upgrade would over rate the power of the grid, therefore it would be unlikely to happen. Also, new panels would not qualify for the original subsidy.*

SignedChairman Date