

# Wickmere with Wolterton Parish Council

Minutes of the annual meeting held in the Village Hall, Regent Street, Wickmere

on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 7.00 pm

## Present:

Parish Councillors:	Lesley Ash (Chair)	Richard Hembling	Alwin Harmer
	Georgina Madeley	Barry Markham	Vanessa Tomczynska

## Also in attendance:

County Cllr Callum Ringer

District Cllr John Toye

A Member of the Public

Vicky Tovell, Clerk to the Council

1. **TO ELECT CHAIRMAN FOR 2025-26** - Lesley Ash was unanimously elected Chair for 2026-2027 and completed the acceptance of office.
2. **TO APPOINT VICE CHAIRMAN FOR 2025-26** - Richard Hembling was appointed as Vice Chair for 2026-2027.
3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – were received from Cllr Phillida Hurn
4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – members of the Village Hall Management Committee declared an interest in Item 11; cllrs Richard Hembling, Lesley Ash, Barry Markham. Clerk reminded council that members of the VHMC have dispensations on file allowing them to vote providing in so doing they remain prejudice free and follow the Code of Conduct. Councillors were reminded of their responsibility to update any changes to their register of interests.
5. **MINUTES**
  1. The minutes of the ordinary meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.
  2. The draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were received.
6. **ADJOURNMENT** - To adjourn the meeting to receive NNDC & NCC reports, comments from members of the public and those with a disclosable interest

Newly elected County Councillor for Erpingham ward Callum Ringer was welcomed to the meeting. Cllr Ringer reported he would work closely with Cllr Toye to provide best service and encouraged council and parishioners to email him with any concerns. Cllr Ringer reported although Reform UK had a minority administration at county, how this will function will be clearer after the full council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2026. He confirmed LGR is still planned with elections to

be held in 12 months time. Under this year's new administrative boundaries, Cllr Ringer has 27 parish councils in his ward. Cllr Ringer left the meeting at 7.18pm

Cllr Toye spoke of a project to provide 'mini' local park and ride services from designated rural village locations, enabling users to connect locally to bus services and with the potential to link bus users from village locations to more central routes. Cllr Toye also reported a project between BT and the council would use old phone boxes for digital displays of information in rural areas and providing wi-fi access for areas with no network coverage. A pilot unit would be trialled at Aldborough.

Cllr Toye reported that refuse collection of batteries and small electrical items had been suspended; domestic food waste collection service had been postponed to February 2027, and the upcoming Bank Holiday would affect normal collection schedules.

A MOP commented that a further noticeboard could be helpful to spread information in the village, particularly in lower Wickmere.

***It was agreed to move Item 11 to this point in the meeting:***

## **11. OWNERSHIP OF FUNDS -**

1. To receive and approve the accounting figures showing Village Hall receipts and expenditure in the financial years 2020 to 2025 (circulated email 28-04-26). The accounting figures were noted as received.
2. To decide the ownership of remaining covid related grant monies:

This item, to decide the ownership and allocation of the covid grant funds, was deferred from 11-03-26 (Item 6) after council had requested detailed financial information before making a decision. The clerk had circulated financial and other information prior to the meeting.

Cllr Harmer had requested via the clerk that District Councillor John Toye be present for Item 11.

The item was brought forward to 6. Chair, Cllr Ash summarised the matter: namely that in 2020 the Covid grants awards were initiated by an application to NNDC from businesses in receipt of Small Business Rates Relief, which applied to Wickmere Village Hall premises. Detail of the initial application was shared at the meeting (i).

Wickmere Village Hall charity was, in 2020, being run and managed by the parish council and therefore the initial 'Small Business Grant' was paid into the parish council's current account, as were the subsequent automatic payments of seven 'Local Restriction Grants' and a final 'Restart' grant in 2021.

Cllr Harmer's report, (presented 11-03-26 Item 6) had suggested all grant monies from the covid grant fund should be held by the VHMC. Cllr Harmer's report had stated the covid grant fund should not be used to subsidise the precept or parish council expenses as had previously occurred.

The sum total of the covid grant awards, from August 2020 to April 2021 was £30,686.64. The clerk had circulated accounts from 2020 onwards to councillors ahead of the meeting. The Accounts Summary doc, shared at the meeting, showed a total of £9,583.62 had been spent directly on VH expenses up to year end 2026. The Summary doc showed (as of 31-03-26) if total remaining grant funds were paid from the parish council to the VHMC a deficit could be expected in the region of £300 (ii)

Cllr Hembling reported his view that the covid grant had been paid to the body responsible at the time for maintaining the viability of the village hall. He stated there had been no restrictions placed on the

grant. Cllr Hembling said from the initial establishment of the Village Hall as a charity in 2008, the parish council had intended it would fund the Charity, (the village hall), as a community asset and that the current system functioned to maintain that concept.

The clerk reminded all that parish council's management of the Village Hall in 2020, although contrary to the terms of the Trust Deed where the need for a separate Management Committee is stated, was an error made in good faith. Since 2024, the unincorporated charity, named as WVHMC, had been functioning as per the terms of the Trust Deed and WVHMC had for three years requested annual grant payments from the parish council to fund its operations.

It was noted that should the VHMC receive an annual income in excess of £5,000 it must legally register with the Charity Commission. There was some discussion around the implications in terms of cost and additional work required by Trustees. There was additional discussion around ring-fencing the funds for the Village Hall and the parish council continuing to fund its activities via grant requests.

Invited to comment, District Cllr John Toye observed that in his experience Covid grant monies awarded to village halls or similar premises had been used in a variety of ways. He knew of instances where the funds had been used to facilitate warm-hubs and the delivery of medicines, to contributing towards large infrastructure projects. Cllr Toye expressed his view that Covid grant monies funds were intended to protect and promote community well-being during Lockdown and that community leaders in receipt of those funds had made their own decisions how funding should be best allocated.

Cllr Toye's opinion was Wickmere parish council's idea of reducing the precept to help with living costs had seemed a reasonable decision in the circumstances. Cllr Toye stated he believed the spirit of the covid grant award to differ from other grants in terms of accountability: with no time line or proof of expenditure required, those in receipt of the grants had looked for the best ways to support parishioners and the well-being of their community in difficult times.

Cllr Toye asked the council to consider what is best for their community. He stated his contributions represented his opinions only and that the council must make its own decision.

Cllr Hembling proposed that that the status quo was maintained with no changes to the current system of the parish council holding the remaining grant money and awarding an annual grant to the Village Hall.

It was agreed, by a unanimous show of hands, to maintain the status quo.

**7. RISK ASSESSMENT**– Wickmere Parish Council draft Risk Assessment Policy was received, amended in light of previous Item 11 decision, approved and signed by the Chair. The Statement of Internal Control was received and approved.

## **8. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2024-2025**

1. The accounts for 2025-2026 were received and approved. The physical folder of audited accounts, invoices and statements was available for inspection.
2. The internal auditor's report for 2025-2026 was received and reviewed. There were no outstanding matters.
3. The Certificate of Exemption for 2025-2026 was read, approved and the Chair and clerk authorised to sign.
4. The assertions on the Annual Governance Statement for 2025-2026 were reviewed, agreed and the Chair and clerk authorised to sign.

5. The Accounting Statement 2025-2026 was reviewed, agreed and the Chair and clerk authorised to sign.

## 9. FINANCE

1. The bank reconciliation was received, approved and signed. Bank statement No: 111 showed a balance of £5,475.23 on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026.
2. The balance of £15,063.35 in the linked 95-day saving account was noted, showing a credit interest of £63.35 after a quarter.
3. Receipt of £2035.00 precept from NNDC and £27.00 VAT refund were noted. Draft payments tabled below were approved and a cheque for £1650 signed for the VHMC grant.
4. Year-end figures on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 were compared against the budget for 2025-26 and variance noted.
5. To appoint internal auditor for 2026-2027 – this item to be referred to next meeting.

### Receipts & Payments

Date	Payee	Description	Receipt	Payment	Balance
	<b>BACS, DD, SO or Transfer</b>				
<b>11-03-26</b>	<b>Bank Statement</b>	<b>110</b>			<b>6,125.89</b>
11-03-26	V Tovell	Salary		259.13	
<b>15-04-26</b>	<b>Bank Statement</b>	<b>111</b>			<b>5,866.76</b>
23-03-26	V Tovell	Travel & other expenses Jan-Feb		132.40	
13-04-26	V Tovell	Salary & Expenses		259.13	
					<b>5,475.23</b>
20-04-26	VAT refund		27.00		
30-04-26	NNDC	Precept	2,035.00		
					<b>7,537.23</b>
<b>11-05-25 (DD scheduled)</b>	Information Commissioner's Office	Data protection fee		47.00	
<b>Draft Payments Tabled for Approval</b>					
13-05-26	V Tovell	Travel & other expenses Mar-Apr		158.00	
13-05-26	WVHMC	Grant 26-27		1650.00	

## 10. ASSETS AND INSURANCE –

1. The schedule of assets was reviewed and approved.
2. The parish council insurance renewal quotations were received and discussed. Zurich's Long Term Undertaking (3 years) at £345.10 per annum was agreed. It was agreed clerk would action before expiration of current policy on 05-06-26.

## 12. CLERKS' REPORT & MATTERS ARISING

1. **Staff Appraisal** – Alwin Harmer and Richard Hembling were appointed to undertake the clerk's annual appraisal: date tbc.
2. **Any other matters arising** – there were no further matters arising.

## 13. PLANNING

1. To consider Planning Applications received: None
2. Planning Decisions as available:
  - **LA/26/0140** Stable House, Wolterton Park Internal & external works to create a new door opening between the existing tack room and new kitchen extension to the west of the Stable House **DECISION: Approved (19-03-26)**
  - **PF/26/0160** Goose Green Cottage Goose Green NR11 7LU Installation of a second storey gable end window constructed of wood in the east facing gable end wall of main dwelling. **DECISION: Approved (23-03-26)**
  - **RV/25/2797 Stable House Wolterton Park** Internal and external works associated with conversion of stable block to form 5 dwellings for holiday letting and events/function facility without complying with condition 2 of listed building consent RV/24/2051 (variation of listed building consent RV/24/1510) to change internal WC layout, new refuse and covered store and revised door openings to function room 1 **DECISION: Approved (17-04-26)**

## 14. HIGHWAYS

1. To note Transport and Travel changes to bus routes as of April 12<sup>th</sup> 2026 (circulated) – it was noted this sort of public information could be circulated on Wickmere Facebook page or via the website but Cllr Hembling and the clerk, as administrators, reported limited use of both platforms.
2. To note TROs: Little Barningham (NTRO11112) road closure due to burst water main 18-03-26. Itteringham, Wolterton Road (NTRO11044) to allow for broadband and telephone installation from 08-05-26 until completion by 19-06-26
3. Update on pothole repairs – NCC confirmation 06-05-26 potholes reported at Squalham had been repaired
4. Any other highways matters - none

## 15. VILLAGE HALL

1. To hear any reports and updates from the VHMC – WVHMC Chair Richard Hembling reported the Plant Sale proceeds of £136 to be split between the VH and the Church (PCC). The Hog-roast would take place on 27<sup>th</sup> June in the afternoon; time tbc.
2. To refer any relevant matters to the VHMC – there were none

**16. CORRESPONDENCE**

1. To note and discuss the Ramblers' Association request for council to audit parish footpaths and ROWs (circulated 05-05-26) – The RA had contacted parish councils in Norfolk suggesting councils undertake an annual audit report at Annual Parish Meetings of footpath status. Volunteers would check the footpaths as declared on NCC's definitive map of Public Rights of Way: sixteen footpaths are listed for Wickmere. It was noted anyone can report footpath issues via NCC's website. Councillors agreed to defer item to next meeting.
2. It was noted correspondence from NNDC Senior Elections Officer regarding Notice of Poll in the Erpingham Division had been displayed.

**17. TO NOTE LATE CORRESPONDENCE TO REFER TO NEXT MEETING** – a MOP had reported Japanese knotweed growing in the area of drainage works off Lower Street. The MOP had reported logging it on the Norfolk Biodiversity website. Councillors noted they were aware of the plant and that it had been present prior to the drainage works. It was noted if on private land it is the landowner's responsibility; if on verge or roadside it is NCC's responsibility. In either case there is no obligation to destroy it unless it becomes a nuisance through spreading.

**18. TO HEAR REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS** - there were none

**19. NEXT COUNCIL MEETING** – the ordinary meeting of the council will be held on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026

**20. TO CLOSE THIS MEETING** – there being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 8.40pm

---