

**Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Wed 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 at 730pm, Dickens Heath Village Hall**

**Present:**

**Dickens Heath Parish Councillors;** Vaseem Arfan, Richard Holt (Chairman), Philip Kendall and Alyson Thompson.

14 members of the Public  
Dawn Harris-Roper and Tom Moore from Centro  
Matt Gardener, Neighbourhood Manager SMBC

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**1. To accept apologies for absence – None.**

**2. Parish Chairman's Report – Richard Holt**

Richard Holt introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting.

- Requirement of Local Government Act
- Opportunity for residents and local electors to meet and talk about local matters
- Designed to enable parishioners to engage and vote on matters – did not bind the Parish Council

Richard Holt then went on to explain the history of the former Hockley Heath Parish Council, serving the areas until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. It being one of the largest Parish Councils in Solihull, covering Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath, Hockley Heath and Tidbury Green. The members felt it was too big and therefore did not act on local interests.

A decision was made to reorganise the Parish Council. Now there were 4 separate new parish councils for these areas.

He introduced the Dickens Heath Parish Councillors. He said they all lived in Dickens Heath and were very keen to have a question and answer session later, to see what the parishioners thought would be beneficial to the area.

He explained they had inherited some former HHPC responsibilities. He said the DH Youth Club was paid for by the Parish Council and part of the costs for the PCSO that worked for the whole former HHPC area.

He said the Parish Council did not own any land or manage the village green, this was undertaken by Parkridge. He added that Parkridge also maintained the country park but maybe this was something the Parish Council could get involved with.

**3. Richard Holt introduced Dawn Harris-Roper from Centro and said she had been invited to talk about public transport and get feedback from the residents of Dickens Heath.**

There was a discussion and comments about;

- Centro introducing an hourly service in their network to Dickens Heath that was not being used very much.
- This service not been seen and or known about.

Dawn stated that it did run; there was a timetable for it.

Dawn explained the long term strategy was to provide a sustainable bus service in the Cheswick Green, Dickens Heath and Tidbury Green area, but this needed to

be commercially viable. Currently Centro were paying to operate a bus service here and that this came from public money.

Dawn asked what service would be used in the village.

A minibus going round the village to the Stratford Road dropping off in Cheswick Green was suggested. It was stated that this was a good idea and would be useful for teenagers, to get to and from Solihull.

It was felt that Centro needed to tell people about the existing service and timetable, plus the need to use it. Dawn said she would take these comments back to the marketing department. Communication via the Dickens Heath directory was suggested. It was stated that until there was proper awareness of the service, it would be hard to gauge. Dawn said she had not realised this was a problem.

Dawn asked if the residents had access to the ring and ride – no one appeared to know. It was stated that this was a really good service; it was felt that again this was down to awareness.

The number of bus stops in the area and bus shelters were mentioned. Dawn explained the logistics of having a bus stop installed.

There were comments that the Community Association had proposed a stop pole on a blind corner opposite a zebra crossing.

There were comments about an hourly, unreliable service, for a village of this size being pretty poor.

Dawn reiterated about services being subsidised by the public purse, lack of patronage and services not being commercially viable.

Dawn spoke about the train from Whitlock’s End and proposals to increase the service, improved parking at the station, extension of the platform and a bus interchange facility.

There were concerns for pedestrians at a junction at Tilehouse lane and there being no safe crossing point on this busy country lane. It was stated that this was an accident waiting to happen. Dawn said she would convey this back to her contact at Solihull MBC, as it was a Highways issue.

Matt Gardner from Solihull MBC said he was happy to take these comments back.

Richard asked if there were any further comments about transport.

It was stated that transport first thing in the morning, between 9-11am to get people to work/college and back from 230 onwards, was what was required.

Dawn said this had been included in the school/college travel plan.

Richard thanked Dawn.

**4. Invite Borough Councillor to speak.**

None present.

**5. Issues of particular local importance.**

**6. Matters raised by electors of the parish.**

There was a discussion about the ownership of various areas. What was owned by the Borough Council and what was privately owned?

Matt Gardner said that Redrow was producing a map of ownership of hedges. He referred to hedges that SMBC had cut before and would again, but if it emerged these did not belong to SMBC, a charge for this work would be made to the owner.

It was felt that this matter had been on going for sometime, that the question of ownership had been raised many times. Matt said Redrow were under extreme pressure to resolve this.

There were comments about overgrown hedges and shrubs in various locations.

There were comments about shared access and shared responsibility.

The traffic islands in Dickens Heath were discussed and who was responsible for these. Matt said he would try to find out.

It was stated that the former HHPC had paid for hanging baskets and floral displays in the main street. Also, that it had been thought it would be nice to get the traffic islands planted out to, but there was the question of ownership and who to contact about this.

It was stated that there maybe a technical problem, regarding planting out the traffic islands as there was no top soil.

Richard said it would only be bedding plants.

Matt referred to an initiative in Cheswick Green. He said he would feedback to the landscape department in relation to this.

There were comments about damage to the islands and no repair work being undertaken, it was stated that this needed to be looked into.

It was stated that Solihull MBC were looking at parking issues and yellow lines for Dickens Heath. That there would be consultation.

There were comments about;

- Parked cars/wagons
- Two school buses arriving together and children dodging the traffic
- Pavements being green and slimy with weeds growing
- Regular updates about which roads had been adopted and this being outstanding
- Overgrown hedges
- Barrier with artificial walkway being very dangerous needing to be made safe
- Parkridge looking after the village green
- The Local Authority imposing responsibility where possible
- Encroachment of hedges onto highways
- Shrubs and overgrowth on Dickens Heath road at the start of the new development from Tidbury Green etc.
- Gullies and side fields causing flooding
- Dickens Heath road being flooded every time it rained

*(Mat said that Severn Trent and Solihull MBC were working on this and exploring this matter.).*

The subject of services for younger and elder people was raised.

It was noted that a Youth Club operated from the Village Hall on Thursday evenings and a contract had been signed for another year, in relation to this. This was funded by the Parish Council and it needed to be considered, whether this was something that should be continued.

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Signature.....

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It was stated this was for 11-16 year olds, it was well ran with professional youth workers.

It was felt that it was poorly attended.

It was stated that two different plans were being looked into. There were comments about consultation carried out 2 years ago, now being out of date, as the participants would have gotten older by now.

There were comments about a skate park and a location being found outside the village.

It was stated that RoSPA guidelines stated that skateboard parks should not be near to young children.

There were comments about the Parish Council contributing towards subscribed summer activities; The Fusion project (professional football coaches) was mentioned.

It was stated that the Parish Councils input was valuable.

There were comments about a unit owned by Parkridge being considered as a location, for a Youth Club type venture. It was felt that younger people were always not keen on organised activities. A 'hang out' type initiative was being considered, containing equipment such as Wiis and music, which would encourage younger people to engage.

CRB checks for staff, police drop-ins, a safe location meeting the needs, with a self policing idea were mentioned.

It was felt that the same location could be used by elderly people during the day as a café. Somewhere to go, that the local retailers may support.

It was stated that a business plan was currently being written, various funding sources were being looked at, there was to be a meeting with the Director of Children's Services, support from the Community Police Officer would be required and anyone that wanted to get involved was encouraged and invited to do so.

Richard Holt asked if there were any other issues.

It was stated that the chippy should come back, there should be more parking, that the notice about this meeting was the first some residents had known about the Parish Council.

*(Note: a gentleman stated he did not get an opportunity to vote; as there were only 5 nominations for the 5 seats on Dickens Heath Parish Council, these 5 people were elected unopposed and no poll took place, therefore there was no opportunity to vote).*

Funds remaining from the former Hockley Heath Parish Council precept were referred to and whether these had been shared out. Richard Holt replied that this had not happened yet.

A parishioner asked how much the precept was. It was confirmed that the 2009/10 Dickens Heath Parish Council precept was £36,000.

It was hoped that the Parish Council would be much better in relation to Dickens Heath now. Richard Holt thanked everyone for attending and their contribution.

**Meeting ended at 855pm**

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