

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday May 2nd 2017 at 7.00pm in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Trevor Eames, Maureen Holloway (Chair), David Jones, Diane Potter, Alan Scholes, Doreen Wright.

WM Police; WPC Sharon Grant and PCSO Wendy Shale

St Patrick's Church; Mick Humphries, Philip Bowen and Sarah Perry

22 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jill Lovett.

2. Presentation by WPC Sharon Grant and PCSO Wendy Shale of WM Police

WPC Sharon Grant and PCSO Wendy Shale are members of the Knowle, Dorridge and Blythe rural team. WM Police 2020 is a vision of the future of the Police to 2020. In November 2016, their team moved to be based in Chelmsley Wood – but they cover this area. Each ward has an allocated officer and PCSO, and WPC Grant and PCSO Shale cover Dickens Heath. This is a transitional stage, and at some point there will be further changes – leading to a more responsive police force of the future.

The officers spoke about the crime figures for Blythe Ward – which covers Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green, Tidbury Green, Monkspath and part of Earlswood. The Police are aware that there is a lot of social media activity on The Only Way is Dickens, and there is a lot of misinformation. There are posts discussing reported crime, but it is not always reported to the Police. Crimes need to be reported to the Police if insurance claims are made, as a crime number is required. But some people may not report crimes, for a variety of reasons.

There have been 59 reported incidents in Dickens Heath in 2017 to date, including:

- 26 of these were assaults, domestic violence, blackmail and inter relationship crimes – ie. not outsiders.
- 20 of these were motor vehicle crimes with 11 thefts - many of them being Ford Focuses.
- Only 4 burglaries
- 2 drug crimes
- 2 thefts

The officers reiterated that residents need to lock their cars and not leave valuables on display, use steering locks and pop up bars on their drives. The Police try cars and find that many are unlocked – an easy target attracts criminals. Residents really need to secure their houses and cars to deter criminals. The Police can't be here all that much, they have to cover other parts of the Ward, and they have to help out other Police teams as required. Dickens Heath is classed as a low crime area in comparison to other parts of Solihull. There are spikes of crime, and when these happen – there will be Police assistance. Residents have a perceived problem of crime, and TOWID gives an unreal picture.

When there is anti-social behaviour (ASB), the Police will act. When there were troublesome youths on bikes last summer, the Police carried out a covert investigation and delivered letters to youths who lived out of the area. Some photos of Dickens Heath youths were put on the village Facebook page when they hadn't done anything.

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Signature.....

Date.....

When a motorbike was causing problems in Dickens Heath, this led to a Section 59 in Kings Norton – and if the motorbike comes into Dickens Heath again, the Police can seize the bike and crush it. The Police are actively trying to discourage ASB, and work with youth services. On Halloween, the Police patrolled with youth services, caught some youths with fireworks and visited their parents. Residents complain about youths in the playground and on the Village Green – but they are allowed to play there if it is not anti social hours.

The Police also work with trading standards and rogue traders – for example with regard to lorries that shouldn't be in Dickens Heath.

The Police also informed those present about WM Now – which has involved the Police, Fire Service, Action Fraud and Solihull MBC signing up to an alert system. Members of the public can join it and receive alerts – they can choose which specific alerts they would like to receive, based on area or topic. Useful information is circulated – some about crime and some good news stories. PCSO Wendy Shale had some leaflets for anyone that was interested.

A resident, Charles, asked about the reporting of crimes, and that there can be a time lag before the Police register them. The Police replied that some of the time delay problems relate to crimes at Whitlocks End train station – it is still under discussion as to whether the station should be under WM Police or British Transport Police. Charles said that the level of prosecution of these crimes is quite low – about 6% in the last year. WPC Grant replied that evidence is needed for a prosecution – either CCTV, DNA or statements. If they don't have any of this evidence, then a crime will be filed. With vehicle crime, if there is no DNA or CCTV evidence, then it will not be investigated. Domestic violence is hard to pursue as victims will often be too frightened to follow up a complaint.

For the West Midlands as a Police Force, the crime figures in Solihull are very low – 697 crimes were committed across the whole of Blythe in the last year. Our local Police team have to go to their Inspectors and bid for resources – and Dickens Heath is usually not on the spectrum. Some areas of the West Midlands have horrendous levels and types of crime - crime in Solihull is very low and so Policing is low in this area.

PCSO Shale assured those present that if there is a spike in crime in Dickens Heath, then they will target the canals, put their A frame sign on the Village Green, and stop youths coming into the village. They have stopped and searched known car criminals, but if they have nothing on them then it can't be taken any further. If residents ring 101, then a log will be generated and the information will get to the local Police team. Many residents find that calls to 101 aren't answered – the Police replied that they should be answered if callers wait. They reiterated that crimes must be reported by ringing 101 and not by email. Crimes reported using 101 will feed into their crime figures which in turn determine to which areas the Police teams are deployed.

The Chair thanked WPC Grant and PCSO Shale for attending this evening, and they agreed that they would stay for the rest of the evening and speak to any residents afterwards if they had any further questions.

3. St Patrick's Church – Plans for the Future

Mick Humphries of St Patrick's Church introduced Sarah Perry who leads the Dickens Heath Youth Group and Philip Bowen who is the church warden.

Sarah gave an update on the Youth Group – it is for children in school years 6 to 9, it has really taken off in recent months and now has from 26 up to 32 attending each week. The group is growing, they have a programme of activities and are looking for more volunteers to help.

Philip gave an update on the boundary of St Patrick's Church parish – which has changed and now contains all of Dickens Heath (it used to contain only part of Dickens Heath), and the vicarage is in Tythe Barn Lane. The Church are therefore planning to get more involved in Dickens Heath – participating in Festival on the Green and holding a Plant Sale in the village. St Patrick's was part of a larger group of churches but is now solo. They have a new website. They hold services at St Patrick's, go out to the Priory Care Home in Monkspath, and would like to expand on this – the one problem in holding services in Dickens Heath would be the lack of car parking.

Mick concluded by saying that St Patrick's is the local parish church for weddings, christenings etc, they would love to hold services in Dickens Heath, but they would need to address the parking problem.

4. Minutes of the Previous Year's Meeting held on April 19th 2016

These were accepted as a true and accurate record, proposed by Councillor Wright and seconded by Councillor Potter.

5. Report from the Parish Council Chair – Maureen Holloway

Chair Maureen Holloway summarised some of the highlights and issues of the last year, which included:

- Landscaping of 3 of the islands
- Introduction of Community Litter Picks
- Clean up of the Nature Reserve
- A very successful Remembrance Service, and purchase of a memorial stone which is now awaiting planning approval
- Seeking residents' views and responding to the Solihull Local Plan Review
- Underground parking for Main St traders while the building work is taking place

Councillor Holloway thanked her fellow Councillors and the Parish Council staff for all of their hard work, and thanked Dickens Heath residents for their input and involvement. The full report can be seen on the parish council website, and in the Dickens Heath Directory for May.

6. Annual Accounts for the Year to March 31st 2017

A resident, Bob, asked whether the Parish Council had any plans for the significant funds held in Reserves. Councillor Trevor Eames answered that the PC would like to pay off part of the mortgage, but while interest rates are so low this would result in the payment of a large penalty. The Parish Council reduced its element of the council tax by 6% last year, but decided to keep it the same for 2017/18 because of potential future costs – which include the Solihull Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan at some point, the memorial and maybe the acquisition of the Village Green and playground. Cheswick Green PC has had to increase its precept by quite a lot to fund repairs to the Village Hall roof – Dickens Heath PC would not be in such a position because its reserves are more than adequate.

7. Blythe Borough Councillors invited to Speak

None present.

8. Issues of Particular Local Importance

Youth Facilities/Dickens Heath Sports Club

A resident asked about facilities for the village's children. The Parish Council would like to acquire the Village Green and improve the playground. For older children there is nothing – which is why the Parish Council is looking at Dickens Heath Sports Club. There is a separate proposal for a youth/community facility at the school. But if the Youth Group were to move to the Sports Club, the Parish Council could potentially get a youth facility there as well. The resident commented that the location of the Sports Club is a problem as it is beyond the

David Wilson and Bellway sites, and there is no footpath beyond these developments – the Parish Council agreed that access would need to be sorted out.

Dickens Heath Sports Club wants to encourage young people to go there and get involved in sport. The Club has a large amount of land, and equipment could be installed that just needs a bit of maintenance. The Parish Council also plans to support Dickens Heath Football Club in relocating to the site.

A resident asked who would own such equipment – the Parish Council would own the equipment and would need a long lease on the land. Councillor David Jones added that the Sports Club have a very good youth worker, and they are having an Open Day in June so that everyone can go along and have a look at their fantastic new facilities.

Another resident commented that teenagers want to be able to go off on their own with their friends, but they couldn't go off to this site. Councillor Holloway replied that a MUGA was originally planned for within the village on the Bellway site, but there was a lot of resistance to it due to its close proximity to homes.

A resident asked how much the Receivers want for the Village Green – the Parish Council has not yet had a reply to this. The Receivers are currently marketing the freehold of the area covered by Dickens Heath Management Co, and it should be sold to a big insurance company. The Receivers do not appear to be interested in discussing the Village Green.

Disabled Parking Spaces outside Mortons

The disabled parking signs have faded – but unfortunately DHMC haven't got any funds to replace them. And parking restrictions aren't enforceable on Main St because it is private. There are changes happening at DHMC, a new team will be in place in the near future. The Receivers have asked for a Traffic Regulation Order on Main St with regard to time restricted parking, double yellow lines and enforced disabled parking bays. This is in the SMBC system, but it takes time.

Traffic Islands

A resident asked why two of the islands are still the responsibility of Redrow. The road has been adopted but not the islands, if they were adopted then the PC could plant them out.

Imprinting around Squareabouts

When the current developments by David Wilson, Bellway and maybe also Elegant Homes, are completed then the imprinting will be replaced with tarmac which will be more cost effective to maintain properly.

Parking around the Village Hall

A resident commented by email that a dance class at the Village Hall will probably fold because parking is such a problem.

Meeting ended 8.35pm