

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday February 16th 2016 in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Philip Brandum, Robert Cudmore, Trevor Eames, Stephen Gussin (Chairman), Maureen Holloway, Diane Potter, Doreen Wright.

9 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 208 (2015/16) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 209 (2015/16) Public Participation

Parkridge House/Car Parking

Jean Walters gave an update on the situation regarding the car parks in the village centre. Jean stated that Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins has circulated a note which says that the conversion of Parkridge House was permitted development, and that part of this was for car parking. However, Jean's view is that the 2002 planning approval is still in existence and its contents cannot just be overturned. A top barrister's advice is that the development has breached the 2002 planning approval, and that the parking spaces should not be obstructed. Jean still feels that there is a strong case, and Solihull MBC need to be convinced – she will be meeting with Kim Allen, Chief Planning Officer, to follow this up.

Minute 210 (2015/16) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 211 (2015/16) Report from the Borough Councillors

None.

Minute 212 (2015/16) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday January 19th 2016

Proposed by Councillor Cudmore, seconded by Councillor Potter, it was **Resolved** that the minutes be approved as a true and accurate record.

Minute 213 (2015/16) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting

Photos of Flooding in the Area

Some photos have been received by the Parish Council, it was agreed that these should be forwarded to our MP and to SMBC Planning.

Condition of Rumbush Lane

There have been a lot of complaints about the terrible condition of Rumbush Lane. Councillor Ken Hawkins has suggested that some repair work will now be done, and he has also requested temporary speed restrictions. It was agreed that the Parish Council should continue to monitor residents' comments and photos on Facebook, and to keep chasing up Highways.

'No Left Turn' at Library

Lorries are getting caught out by this, they need prior warning – eg. a sign at kidney island.

For Sale and To Let signs

These do make the village look untidy, but cannot be banned if they are on private land. With apartments, the decision is the responsibility of the managing agents.

Adverse Camber sign on Tythe Barn Lane

Paul Tovey at SMBC had suggested that double yellow lines near the school would solve this problem, but nothing further has been heard and needs chasing up again.

Anti Social Behaviour and Security in the Village

Sapphire Management Services at Waterside provide security and CCTV in the village centre for Dickens Heath Management Co. The Chairman to discuss the possibility of additional security with them.

Cigarette Butt Litter at Clock Island

Letters have been delivered to occupants of all of the apartments, pointing out that if they are throwing this litter out of their windows, then it is a criminal offence.

Request for Canal Towpath Maintenance

Some maintenance work has been done on the local canal towpath, and a request was made for this to be extended. The Canal and River Trust unfortunately has responded that no further work is planned at the moment in the area, as they lack funding and they have a lot of towpaths in a worse condition. They did advise that they would be able to provide support to any volunteers willing to carry out some maintenance.

Minute 214 (2015/16) Planning Applications

Planning application 2016/00254 - 89 Birchy Close - this planning application covers 12 mature trees, with the felling of 2 of them and reduction of the others. The plan of the trees is very sketchy and it was agreed that the Parish Council should submit comments that there should be a proper site plan and assessment, and a request that the SMBC Tree Officer take a look at the trees to ensure that the work is necessary.

No comments on the other planning application.

Minute 215 (2015/16) Planning Sub-CommitteeNeighbourhood Plan

Tidbury Green Parish Council have decided not to participate in a joint Neighbourhood Plan. Members of the Planning Sub-Committee will be meeting with officers at SMBC and keeping in touch with Cheswick Green PC. The Parish Council considered a report from the Planning Sub-Committee - it recommended that Richard Cobb be invited to make a presentation to a special meeting of the Parish Council. Richard is a Chartered Town Planner, a former Deputy Chief Planning Officer at SMBC and currently works as a planning consultant locally. A summary of indicative financial information was tabled. A basic Neighbourhood Plan is likely to cost in the region of £13,000 with a grant of up to £8,000 currently available. It was agreed that the Clerk should make arrangements for holding a special meeting of the Parish Council, with a provisional date of March 17th 2016.

Minute 216 (2015/16) Meeting with SMBC Planning Officers

SMBC Planning and the PC Planning Sub-Committee have differing opinions on which version of the planning application for the remaining developments in the village centre is currently valid. They also differ on whether the parking spaces within the car parks which have been designated for private use are 'obstructed' or not. Jean Walters is meeting with Kim Allen of SMBC to discuss these legalities. Councillor Phil Brandum raised the question of whether this argument can be won, and whether it is realistic to expect SMBC to tell Elegant Homes that the parking spaces must be taken back from the owners of the apartments. This debate is not just about the bollarded parking spaces, Elegant Homes could co-operate to provide other additional parking spaces – it is a fine balance, there is a risk of upsetting Elegant Homes. Elegant Homes had suggested that they were prepared to give the car parks to SMBC along with some of the parking spaces in Garden Squares II – but SMBC had said that they were 'not interested' and couldn't afford the maintenance costs. Jean reiterated that SMBC can't overturn planning law just to suit themselves. If it can be shown that SMBC have made an error, then maybe that will force them to take on the parking spaces in Garden Squares. Councillor Trevor Eames feels that the correct position needs to be established. Councillor

Bob Cudmore suggested that the best way to achieve maximum parking should be the way forward. It was agreed that the Parish Council would wait for the feedback from Jean Walters' meeting with Kim Allen before deciding how best to move this forward. Parish Councillors want to work with Elegant Homes, but want to see it done legally.

Minute 217 (2015/16) SMBC Maintenance/Cleansing Schedule

Councillors Di Potter and Bob Cudmore have both done walkabouts with Matt Gardner of SMBC to look at the dangerous pavements and the general lack of cleaning of them. SMBC claim that cleaning takes place, but no one has seen it being done. An extra deep clean would cost an estimated £4,166 and SMBC Streetcare will let us know how much of a contribution towards this they could make, with the Parish Council having to fund the difference. In terms of getting the cleaning actually done, Amey cannot do any extra, Aquaclean could potentially do some – the Chairman to get a quote from them.

The problem is not just the green algae, the brickwork on the footpaths is unsuitable. Is the cleaning schedule adequate? Are SMBC carrying out their obligations? The Parish Council are very sceptical about whether the cleaning is being done at all, and certainly don't feel that the PC should fund the whole amount.

Minute 218 (2015/16) Covenant on the Village Public Areas

The Covenant is between SMBC and the land owners. The Parish Council needs a copy of the whole covenant, and what it means, both for the proposed Neighbourhood Plan and for the proposal to buy the Village Green. The Clerk to contact the SMBC Legal Dept for advice. The Clerk to also contact Michael Johnson of Dickens Heath Management Co. for details of the liquidators and who we should contact with regard to purchasing the Village Green.

Minute 219 (2015/16) Traffic Regulation Order – Additional Double Yellow Lines

All agreed that they were in support of these.

Minute 220 (2015/16) Maintenance of Islands

Councillor Bob Cudmore is getting 3 or 4 quotes in for planting up of 3 islands.

Minute 221 (2015/16) Response to a Proposed Church of England Presence in Dickens Heath

It was agreed that the Parish Council support this in principle and would like to thank Rev Peter Law Jones for coming along to the January meeting.

Minute 222 (2015/16) Anti Social Behaviour in the Village

It has been a quieter month in terms of anti-social behaviour than the previous one. The Chairman is still to speak to Sapphire Management Services about the possibility of increasing security.

Minute 223 (2015/16) Reports from Councillors who attended any outside events

Solihull Area Committee Meeting

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright attended the SAC meeting which included a presentation on the Combined Authority.

Meeting with SMBC Officers about School Places

Councillors Doreen Wright and Trevor Eames met with Gary Palmer and Ann Pearson to clarify the provision of primary school places in the villages in the vicinity, given current and likely future new developments. Tidbury Green School has the potential capacity to increase from one form entry to 2 form entry, plus around 50% of its current pupils are from out of catchment, with many from outside Solihull. Cheswick Green Primary School could also potentially expand to 2 form entry, so there should be sufficient capacity for primary school places in the vicinity. The Parish Council thanked Councillors Doreen Wright and Trevor Eames for their report.

DH Youth Club

Councillor Phil Brandum reported that Dickens Heath Youth Club are struggling a bit, some weeks there have been no young people turning up. They have a strategy for improving numbers, and will report back in a couple of months.

Minute 224 (2015/16) Welcome to the Village Signs

Suggested locations for a Welcome to the Village sign on each of the 4 main routes into the village were discussed and agreed in principle. The locations to be forwarded to SMBC with a request as to what type of signs they would be able to provide.

Minute 225 (2015/16) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Wright, seconded by Councillor Cudmore, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the February 16th 2016 Agenda be approved – 4 direct debits and 19 cheques totalling £10,988.52.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £86,000. The Clerk's pay is moving from the SMBC payroll to the Parish Council's own payroll as of April 1st. As SMBC have been invoicing the PC for this quarterly in arrears, and the Parish Council accounts on a Receipts and Payments (Cash) basis, there will be 15 months of the Clerk's pay in either this financial year or the next. It was agreed that SMBC should invoice in March for the Clerk's pay to the end of the financial year so that it is all included in 2015/16.

Bill Robinson of WALC has done the internal audit for the Parish Council for the past few years. It was agreed that Bill again be asked to be our Internal Auditor for the 2015/16 end of year.

Minute 226 (2015/16) Parish RoomsShorthand Classes

A resident has asked whether it might be possible to run shorthand classes in the Parish Rooms. The Parish Council agreed this in principle, if there is enough interest.

Barnardos

Barnardos don't currently have any further days in the diary to use the Parish Rooms. As the shop in Dickens Heath will be closing soon, it was agreed that any further requests from Barnardos to use the Parish Rooms would be referred to the Parish Council for a decision as and when they occur.

Minute 227 (2015/16) Annual Parish Meeting (APM)

The Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting for the residents, at which they can raise and discuss any matters of concern or importance, and it must be held between March and May. It was agreed that the APM should be held on Tuesday April 19th at 6.30pm. It was agreed that the Clerk should arrange the usual buffet refreshments for after the APM, this would then be followed by a Parish Council meeting at around 7.30pm.

Minute 228 (2015/16) Amendment to Standing Orders

The Chairman stated that at last month's meeting Councillors had to vote on a proposal that they had no prior knowledge of, and as a result it was proposed that Standing Orders should be amended to add:

'All papers for discussion shall be sent to the proper officer in time to be distributed to Councillors with the meeting papers at least 5 clear days before the meeting.'

Not all Councillors were in agreement with this proposal, and Councillor Di Potter said that the Parish Council was here to work together for the good of the village – proposals do need to be given to the Clerk first, but sometimes urgent things crop up and there needs to be a way of dealing with these. It was agreed by 4 votes to 3 that the amendment be made with an addition that urgent issues can be dealt with, if necessary by having an Extraordinary Meeting.

Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Tuesday 16th February 2016

Signature.....

Date.....

Minute 229 (2015/16) Correspondence

WALC Annual Briefing Day March 12th 2016

This is an informative day for Councillors and Clerks, the Clerk to circulate details to Councillors.

Solihull Partnership Forum February 24th 2016

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright to attend.

Parking Restrictions

Representatives of Balsall and Berkswell PC and Balsall Common Residents Association are interested in the parking restrictions and ban on pavement/verge parking in Dickens Heath, and would like to meet up with members of the Parish Council to discuss the process and whether it has been a success.

Minute 230 (2015/16) Items for Next Agenda

Centro will attend to present their pre-planning application plans for the Whitlocks End train station car park.

Hanging baskets for the summer.

Minute 231 (2015/16) It was Resolved that, in accordance with paras I and II Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public should be asked to withdraw due to the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Minute 232 (2015/16) Litter Picker/Handyperson Vacancy

The applications, and a proposed process for interviews, were discussed and agreed.

Meeting ended 10pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday March 15th 2016: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms