

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday July 21st 2015 in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Philip Brandum, Robert Cudmore, Trevor Eames (from 7.30pm), Stephen Gussin (Chairman), Maureen Holloway.

Police Officer Tariq Dost

12 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 66 (2015/16) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Councillors Di Potter and Doreen Wright.

Minute 67 (2015/16) Update from the Local Police

PC Tariq Dost reassured everyone present that Dickens Heath is a safe neighbourhood, with a low crime rate – the only exception being thefts from cars. In the past 6 months, there have been 39 thefts from cars – which is an average of around 6 per month. In the 6 months, 4 cars were stolen. The level of thefts from cars is not too terrible, but it is far higher than other crime in this area. In order to tackle this, undercover police have been in the area between midnight and 4am. They try the doors of vehicles, and find that many are unlocked, and so have tried to encourage residents to be more vigilant through leaflet drops and putting the billboard on the Village Green. In terms of other crime, there have been 3 burglaries in 6 months which is very low, and 5 reported for anti social behaviour which is not bad for a close knit area. Dickens Heath is generally not a problem for the police. The Dickens Heath Management Co. security is also a great deterrent, and they do contact the police. The Chair thanked PC Dost for coming along to the meeting to update residents.

Minute 68 (2015/16) Festival on the Green 2015

Andrew Simpkins thanked the Parish Council for their support and gave a brief update on progress with their plans.

Minute 69 (2015/16) Dickens Heath Scouts Group

Giovanni Martini is the Group Scout Leader, and he gave a brief overview of the Group. Since being set up in April/May of this year, they now have 40 children involved in beavers and cubs, plus a waiting list. They are planning to expand when they can. They have submitted a grant application form to the Parish Council, and any contribution to their set up costs would be very gratefully received. They have had a good first term and have now started to raise funds for themselves, but in order to fund all the set up costs they have borrowed funds from other Scout Groups – and these debts will need to be repaid. The Parish Council to discuss this grant application later in the meeting.

Minute 70 (2015/16) Public Participation

Highway Issues/Parking

SMBC Highway Improvements

The works that have had to be redone are still not satisfactory. Some of the bollards have been placed the wrong way round as the reflectors are not all in the same direction. It was agreed that a letter should be send to the Chief Executive of SMBC to ask who is funding all of these errors.

Double Yellow Lines

The double yellow lines at Waterside have still not been put back – the Clerk to follow this up with Paul Tovey again.

Village Maintenance/LitterBrockhurst Lane Planting

This has been done, the Clerk received a photo as confirmation this morning.

Future DevelopmentsLoss of Trees on Rumbush Lane near the Bellway Development

Trees on a small wooded area, which were not protected, have been partially cut down. Solihull MBC have issued an emergency Tree Protection Order, the felling has now been stopped, but the owner can still appeal. This is not connected to the Bellway development, both Bellway and SMBC had said that the trees would remain. The Parish Council were all in agreement that the TPO should be supported on the basis of the amenity value of the land.

Other IssuesDHMC Service Charge

A resident raised the issue of the service charge paid to Dickens Heath Management Co. Residents feel that they are being 'ripped off', they pay a lot of money, and the level of service has really gone down. The Parish Council has regular meetings with DHMC, and a new cleaning contractor has recently been brought in. The Parish Council suggested that residents should forward their concerns to the Clerk or individual Councillors, so that they could be consolidated before the Parish Council's next meeting with DHMC. It was also suggested that a group of affected residents should get together and seek advice from the Leasehold Advisory Service.

Minute 71 (2015/16) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 72 (2015/16) Gardening/Landscaping Issues

Work is still progressing with regard to planting out some of the traffic islands.

Minute 73 (2015/16) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday June 16th 2015

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

Minute 74 (2015/16) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meetingVillage Survey

It was agreed that this should now be shut down on survey monkey.

Fire Risk Assessment

The capacity of the Parish Rooms has been confirmed as 50 people.

Construction Route Signs

Following an incident today when a construction lorry got stuck on Rumbush Lane, it was agreed that the need for some signs be chased up with Paul Tovey.

Request for Adverse Camber sign on Tythe Barn Lane

Paul Tovey proposed double yellow lines around the school which will address this problem.

Overflowing Bins in the Village and Cleaning of Main St

SMBC empty bins twice a week. DHMC appointed a new cleaning contractor from July 1st and they are still settling in. Main St is litter picked daily and bins are cleared daily. Other cleaning is done as and when necessary.

Griffin Lane Flood Defence Fencing

This has now been completed, residents are pleased with the result.

Memorial

The drawings, map and photos have been forwarded to Planning at SMBC, the Clerk to chase up.

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Signature.....

Date.....

Alternative Christmas Decorations

Although there has been some support recently on Facebook for the solar Christmas trees, the Parish Council agreed that the Clerk should contact SMBC about whether it would instead be feasible to put a lit up Christmas tree on the clock island.

Offer for the Village Green/Playground

There has been no reply yet from the Receivers.

Litter in Canal at Waterside

The Canal and River Trust has confirmed that a volunteer water borne litter task force will be working in the area at the end of the month, and will look at this.

Minute 75 (2015/16) Planning Applications

No comments.

Minute 76 (2015/16) Financial Matters

The cheque for Festival on the Green was discussed – whether it should be £500, or less than that if their shortfall proved to be less than £500. Andrew Simpkins confirmed that they had commitments which did require the full £500. It was agreed by a majority vote that a cheque for £500 be signed dependent on receiving confirmation of how this is spent.

It was **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the July 21st 2015 Agenda be approved – 22 cheques and 1 direct debit totalling £7,424.25. This included an additional cheque for £180 to Hortons Automatics for the doors service, and an £89.70 direct debit to BT for broadband services.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £96,000 and is projecting a surplus of £74,000 at the year end.

Minute 77 (2015/16) Reports from Councillors who attended any outside events

Councillors Trevor Eames and Maureen Holloway attended the Village Hall management committee, which was very interesting. The committee currently ask for a £250 deposit in case of damage at private functions. This will be increasing to £500 because damage caused recently has cost in excess of £250. The £35 per hour hire cost will also be increasing for private functions. The Village Hall management committee confirmed that they would like to have a dialogue with the Parish Council.

Minute 78 (2015/16) Richborough Estates/ Other Development Proposals

There has been no movement on the Richborough Estates proposal.

Bellway have forwarded a map of the layout of the new development, and have asked whether the Parish Council wish to be involved in the discussion of road names. The Parish Council confirmed that they would.

Minute 79 (2015/16) Youth/Community Project

Chris Barr is the lead officer at SMBC for the proposed youth and community facility at the school. If the new Parish Council agrees to support the project, then Chris will go ahead with a public consultation. Councillor Eames stated that he had reservations about certain aspects of the project – including its supervision, the extent of out of hours use and how much the Parish Council was expected to commit in terms of funding. Councillor Brandum stated that the previous Parish Council had been in support of the project, and that Chris Barr knows that there will be operational matters to consider as a result of consultation. He suggested that the Parish Council support the project on this basis. The facility will be fairly small and always supervised while in use, it will be accessible for lettings and use out of hours. Another concern raised was that it will be very expensive if only the school and Parish Council are financing it, and a long term commitment such as this requires a business plan. A proposed 3 way (SMBC/school/PC) management agreement has been drawn up, but it doesn't contain any running costs, this to be circulated to all Councillors. The capital costs are already covered. In addition, SMBC have indicated that this is the last chance for a youth facility in the village.

It was suggested that the Parish Council should support in principle this proposal for a facility at the school. Councillor Holloway suggested that the proposal first be discussed with residents before the Parish Council made their decision. It was agreed by 3 votes to 2, with Councillors Trevor Eames and Maureen Holloway voting against, that the Parish Council should support this facility prior to public consultation and receiving further information on the management and financial implications. Chris Barr now intends to arrange an open day for consultation with the public.

Minute 80 (2015/16) General Power of Competence (GPC)

The Clerk has recently been awarded CiLCA – the Certificate in Local Council Administration. Since all of the Parish Councillors are now 'elected' and the Clerk is qualified, the Parish Council can consider whether to take the General Power of Competence. This was introduced in the Localism Act 2011 and allows a parish council to do anything that individuals generally may do, as long as it doesn't break other laws. However, the local council must still act reasonably when using the GPC.

It was **Resolved** that the Parish Council should take the General Power of Competence.

Minute 81 (2015/16) Dickens Heath Management Co. Lease & Service Charge

The Parish Council has been building a relationship with DHMC. Many residents are unhappy about the high service charge and falling level of service, but Barbara and Michael at DHMC are also unhappy about the current situation. It was agreed that the Parish Council's copy of the lease for the Parish Rooms should be circulated around the Parish Councillors.

Minute 82 (2015/16) Meeting with SMBC Staff about the Library

Issues discussed at the meeting included the library's opening hours, usage, and whether it would be possible for any other organisations to also use the premises – eg. The Parish Council or a business enterprise hub. Councillor Cudmore feels that it will be difficult to increase the usage of the library, and therefore it is necessary to make better use of the building. Use of the library is going down, hours have been reduced and they cannot stay open at lunch time due to SMBC's policy on single manning. However, there are one or two people who are prepared to volunteer in the library to allow the opening hours to be extended. There was no mention that the library would close.

Minute 83 (2015/16) Grant Applications

The grant application from Dickens Heath Football Club was considered. Although this involves a relatively low number of residents, the Parish Council agreed on a grant of £200 for 2015/16.

The grant application from the new Dickens Heath Scouts group was also considered. The Parish Council agreed on a grant of £300 towards their neckerchiefs and badges.

Minute 84 (2015/16) Parish Rooms

Details of Councillor contacts in case of an emergency at the Parish Rooms were agreed, Sapphire Management Services are the emergency key holder.

The use of a key box was suggested – the Clerk to check how this would affect insurance.

Minute 85 (2015/16) New Dickens Heath Scouts Group

The Scouts group have asked how they could get involved with the local community – suggestions included bulb planting, litter picking and attending the Remembrance Service.

Minute 86 (2015/16) Parking at Whitlocks End Train Station

Solihull MBC are now in support of an extension to the car park.

Minute 87 (2015/16) Items for next agenda

Lease – for September agenda.

Meeting ended 9.45pm

Next Meeting : Thursday August 27th 2015: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms

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Date.....