

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday March 15th 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.

5 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 233 (2015/16) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 234 (2015/16) Centro's Plans for the Whitlocks End train station car park

Lisa Ollis, of the Centro PR team, and Scott Cooper, project manager for the scheme, outlined the proposal. They are attending the PC meeting as part of the pre-consultation, and SMBC are supportive in principle of the design. The public consultation has started, Centro have delivered more than 1,000 consultation documents to local residents, and have so far received 239 responses on line and 50 on paper. It was pointed out that they may have missed out Birchy Close.

Jean Walters, representing the CPRE, made a few points: the footpath and cycle route on the North side of Tythe Barn Lane, by Akamba, is inadequate and needs to be improved. As the proposal is on Green Belt land, they need to demonstrate exceptional circumstances for this use of land, and they need to address buffer landscaping given that it is Green Belt. They also need to look at the access to Tilehouse Lane as visibility is not good. Jean will summarise her points and forward them to the Clerk. Wythall PC, which lies on the other side of the train station, has commented that there is no lighting on the other side of the bridge, and the footpath is very narrow. They have requested a couple of lamp posts between the bridge and Haslucks Green Rd, but there are no funds for this at the moment. Centro are carrying out a prioritisation exercise and the proposal for this site should be well received – they have a limited pot of money for some preferred sites. Centro believe that this site has a lot going for it with regard to cost and environmental issues, but it is Green Belt. They are also getting schemes ready for the Combined Authority (Centro is the transport body) so that they are ready to go if funding becomes available.

A resident asked about the level of disabled parking, which is underused at the moment. A specified level has to be included and there has to be a reason for any reduction in disabled parking.

The plans include a pond extension to provide sustainable drainage for the additional parking spaces. Councillor Doreen Wright asked whether a couple of additional spaces could be squeezed in by the pond – but this is not possible as sufficient access to the pond must be maintained.

If the proposal is given planning approval, subject to funding being available, it will take 3 to 4 months to construct, and at this point – Centro will circulate additional information. Scott Cooper agreed to forward to the PC Centro's pre planning advice from SMBC.

The Parish Council thanked Lisa and Scott for attending the meeting.

Minute 235 (2015/16) Public ParticipationFlooding

A resident asked whether local flood controls are adequate given recent events. Councillor Trevor Eames stated that Rumbush Lane and Tythe Barn Lane have flooded in recent days, and on the David Wilson site some trees have been under water. This has been taken up with Ed Bradford and the Tree Officer at SMBC – the drainage system at David Wilson/Bellway is not good enough, and SMBC are looking at it.

Minute 236 (2015/16) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 237 (2015/16) Report from the Borough Councillors

None.

Minute 238 (2015/16) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday February 16th 2016

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

Minute 239 (2015/16) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting'No Left Turn' at Library

Matt Gardner at SMBC to ask for an assessment on whether this sign can be removed.

Welcome to the Village Signs

Proposed locations have been forwarded to SMBC.

Consultation for a Proposed Youth Facility at the School

There should be a new date for this in the Spring.

Memorial

The planning application is in and has been processed by SMBC.

Request for Canal Towpath Maintenance

The Canal and River Trust have confirmed that any volunteers would be covered by their 3rd party liability insurance. It was agreed that this should be progressed.

Minute 240 (2015/16) Planning Applications

Two additional planning applications were considered:

2016/00605 - 12 Yarn Lane - Orangery to rear.

2016/00705 - 71 Birchy Close - Garage conversion to granny annex.

No comments on either planning application.

Minute 241 (2015/16) Planning Sub-CommitteeNeighbourhood Plan

Members of Planning Sub-Committee met with Emma Tinsley of SMBC to discuss the start of the Neighbourhood Plan process. The area designation is the first step, is fairly straightforward, and takes around 6 weeks. The locality grant has been increased from £8,000 to £9,000 but still needs to be spent within the financial year. Emma advised that the Neighbourhood Plan should be developed in tandem with the progress of the Solihull Local Plan Review. In the meantime, the PC can get the ball rolling, getting presentations out to the community. Councillor Maureen Holloway to keep a register of activities to fully engage the community.

Neighbourhood Plan – Special Meeting of the PC

Arrangements were finalised for this meeting on Thursday March 17th 2016.

Minute 242 (2015/16) SMBC Cleansing of Slippery Block Paving

Members of the Parish Council held a very positive meeting with SMBC officers about the dangerous state of the block paving around the islands in the village. Residents already pay for a cleaning service in their rates, but it is not keeping the pavements safe and a solution to the current problem needs to be found. A solution would be for a one-off deep clean of the paving followed by an anti-fungal treatment, and then manual scrubbing with brushes once a month to keep on top of the problem – which could be achieved by diverting the SMBC litter pickers one week in four to cleaning the pavements instead. The Parish Council are being asked to make a contribution towards the one off deep clean, but this contribution was reduced to £1,500 at this meeting.

The SMBC officers acknowledge that the porous clay tiles used around Dickens Heath are totally unsuitable, and they won't let developers use them now – but it is too expensive to replace them. They look nice, but they require regular jet washing. SMBC have limited resources, but these resources can be used in a different way. In terms of litter in the village, the national standards are far exceeded in Dickens Heath, SMBC could do less litter picking and still meet these standards in Dickens Heath. The proposal is that, every fourth week, SMBC litter pickers will instead brush the footpaths to keep them clean. The Parish Council will need to know the schedule for this so that our litter picker can co-ordinate with it.

The reason for the Parish Council's financial contribution was clarified – it is a one off to make sure that the cleansing gets done. Chris Barr of SMBC has emailed an action plan, with the understanding that this will deal with the problem on an ongoing basis.

It was agreed, all in favour, that the Parish Council make the one off contribution of £1,500 towards the deep cleanse of the pavements.

The Parish Council also agreed that they were in support of SMBC's suggestion of a visit to the school to do a presentation on the problems of dog fouling, litter and dropping chewing gum.

Minute 243 (2015/16) Centro's Proposal for an Extension to the Whitlocks End train station car park

The Parish Council supported the original petition for this. SMBC were initially reluctant to support it, but now do so in principle and Centro have taken pre-planning advice from SMBC.

Minute 244 (2015/16) Proposal for a Memorial for Sophie

The family of Sophie, who drowned in the canal, would like to do something to mark her passing in July, for example possibly a sponsored walk along the canal. A number of the Parish Councillors would support and attend such an event. The Chairman agreed to contact the family.

Minute 245 (2015/16) Hanging Baskets

The quote from Plantscape for the hanging baskets plus watering for the summer was considered – there has been no increase in price from 2015. All agreed that the hanging baskets be ordered.

Minute 246 (2015/16) Maintenance of Islands

Four quotes have been received for the planting up of 3 islands – a representative of each company had walked around the sites with Councillor Bob Cudmore and had been given the brief that the islands be reasonably attractive and relatively maintenance free all year round – plus with some flowers in the summer. Several Councillors were very impressed with the proposal from Immaculate Gardens, however it is not the cheapest quote. The proposal from the Solihull Rangers has the advantage that they will already have clearance from SMBC. It was agreed that Councillor Bob Cudmore approach Immaculate Gardens to ascertain whether their price could be reduced with the possibility also of materials being purchased via the Parish Council to benefit from the VAT element and to also clarify the specification being proposed by the lowest priced tenderer – in order that there was sufficient information

available for a decision to be made at the April Parish Council meeting. The Clerk to double check with SMBC that the proposals would meet their visibility regulations.

Councillors Bob Cudmore, Di Potter and Doreen Wright have planted out crocus, tulip and daffodil bulbs on the kidney island.

Minute 247 (2015/16) Reports from Councillors who attended any outside events

Solihull Partnership Forum

This was attended by Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright and was very thought provoking. There was a presentation on the Solihull Local Plan, and those attending were split into groups, with a map, and asked to position 4,000 extra homes in the Borough. And then an additional 2,000 houses from Birmingham. Everyone tried to put houses in Dickens Heath! There was also a presentation from Centro giving an update on buses. The Diamond bus service is a bit of a disaster, they are virtually on a final warning, but there is no one else to pick up the service.

WALC Annual Briefing Day

This was a worthwhile day, and very good for networking. One of the presentations covered superfast broadband and how it is being rolled out to areas which are not covered by a commercial provider. The proximity to a cabinet matters, and so even though Dickens Heath should all have access to superfast broadband, not everyone is actually close enough to a cabinet.

Minute 248 (2015/16) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Eames, seconded by Councillor Cudmore, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the March 15th 2016 Agenda be approved – 2 direct debits and 19 cheques totalling £6,411.47, including an additional cheque for £725.58 to GBR Phoenix Beard for the quarterly service charge.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £84,000.

A direct debit form was approved and signed for the British Gas supply of gas.

Minute 249 (2015/16) Parish Rooms

Yoga Classes

Alicia, who has been running yoga classes in the Parish Rooms almost from the day that the PC moved in, has now moved into her own premises at Waterside. She thanked the Parish Council for supporting her.

Blossoms Day Nursery

Blossoms Day Nursery at Waterside have asked whether they can use the Parish Rooms for staff meetings, and possibly in the future to have special sessions for the children – eg. yoga bugs. These were both agreed.

Minute 250 (2015/16) Parish Council Emails

The Parish Council emails are supported by Carasol Web Solutions, and since they changed the service provider, no one has been able to get the emails working properly. The Clerk to ask Carasol to show us how to update the service provider, or to change again to one that we can use – as we are not currently receiving the service that has been paid for.

Minute 251 (2015/16) Annual Parish Meeting (APM)

It was agreed that arrangements should be made as in previous years, plus posting information on Facebook.

Minute 252 (2015/16) Grant Making Policy and Application Form

Deferred – Councillor Trevor Eames to bring a proposal to the April meeting.

Minute 253 (2015/16) Correspondence

Closure of Rumbush Lane

Rumbush Lane is to be closed continuously from March 29th until May 20th for pipe work.

Fairtrade

SMBC is a Fairtrade Borough and is encouraging parish councils to consider becoming Fairtrade parishes. It was agreed that this was not particularly applicable as the different groups using the Parish Rooms bring their own refreshments.

Neighbourhood Watch

SMBC have circulated information on setting up a Neighbourhood Watch – it was agreed that this should be publicized.

Dead Horse

The dead horse has now been removed by SMBC, thank you to Councillors Di Potter, Doreen Wright and Trevor Eames for their help with this.

Minute 254 (2015/16) Items for Next Agenda

Grant Making Policy, Youth Club

Minute 255 (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 256 (2015/16) Litter Picker/Handyperson Vacancy

Those shortlisted have been interviewed by members of the Parish Council and a Dickens Heath resident appointed.

Meeting ended 9.20pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday April 19th 2016: 7.30pm following the APM in The Parish Rooms