

# The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Thursday May 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 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.

Solihull Borough Councillors; Linda Brown, Ken Hawkins, Richard Holt.

26 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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### **Minute 1 (2015/16) Election of Chairman**

Councillor Holloway proposed Councillor Eames, and Councillor Cudmore proposed Councillor Gussin as Chairman and therefore this was put to a vote. By 4 votes to 3, Councillor Gussin was elected Chairman.

### **Minute 2 (2015/16) To Receive the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

This was signed.

### **Minute 3 (2015/16) Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **Minute 4 (2015/16) Public Participation**

#### **Highway Issues/Parking**

##### Double Yellow Lines on Rumbush Lane at the Clock Island

This concern has been forwarded to SMBC numerous times, Matt Gardner is forwarding comments to the relevant officer at SMBC.

##### Double Yellow Lines at Island at Waterside

With the road repairs, the double yellow lines have now gone. Further remedial work is still to be done, and following this the lines should be reinstated.

##### School Traffic

On Tythe Barn Lane, traffic during the school run is causing gridlock. Residents don't wish to see more double yellow lines put in, but would like to suggest single yellow lines which restrict parking at each end of the school day. The Parish Council agreed that this should be taken up with SMBC as part of the Review of Parking Restrictions.

##### SMBC Highway Works

The highway works that have recently been carried out are sub-standard and should be rectified in the next few weeks. Additional bollards are also proposed to go in the gaps of the 'cycle friendly' works.

#### **Village Maintenance/Litter**

##### Brockhurst Lane Footpath – Planting

This has not happened yet – Matt Gardner, SMBC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, is chasing it up.

#### **Future Developments**

Resident Jean Walters thanked Councillor Brandum for his hard work during his year as Chairman. She then summarised work that she is doing with regard to the plans for Tidbury Green Farm, which are going to the Secretary of State with a decision expected in September. The Right Honourable Caroline Spelman MP is giving her support and will be speaking to the Secretary of State. Jean also stated that the Lowbrook Farm inquiry will be opening on June 9<sup>th</sup> 2015. The Parish Council expressed their support for the work that Jean is doing on this, and representatives of the Parish Council will attend the inquiry.

Neighbourhood Plan

Jean also suggested that the Parish Council needed to have a Neighbourhood Plan in order to give the community more control over future development. She offered her help, she works with the Campaign to Protect Rural England and they can assist in working to prevent inappropriate development in rural areas.

Football Clubs

A resident asked whether the football fields were likely to be sold for development. Councillor Eames confirmed that approaches had been made to the landowners, but that there was nothing definite. However, SMBC does not have a 5 year land supply and so developers are bringing forward sites. As sports grounds, these sites should have some protection, but nothing can be done until there is a planning application.

It is of concern that, in November 2015, SMBC will not have a 5 year land supply and developers will potentially be able to take advantage.

Bellway Site

This was included in the Solihull Local Plan at a very late stage, but was a reserved site and is all going ahead now. A resident stated that the demolition on this site has caused a lot of dust and residents are worried that there is asbestos. However, demolition is not covered by Planning.

Cleobury/Braggs Farm/ Rumbush Lanes

Residents want to see the sight line improved at this junction, but SMBC are being resistant.

Construction Traffic Route

No signs are up yet for construction traffic, and the agreed route has not yet been signed off by Highways for the Bellway site. The David Wilson construction traffic's route is from the south via Rumbush Lane and is not allowed through the village centre or along Cleobury, Braggs Farm or Birchy Leasowes Lanes. David Wilson have told their contractors what the route is, but they need signs. This will not keep 100% of construction traffic out of the village, but should keep it to a minimum. The Bellway Homes routing is expected to be similar to that for David Wilson. There should be a contact to report concerns to, residents are concerned about wheel washing and debris being moved from the sites to the village.

David Wilson Site

There is a temporary set of regulations on access, enforcement officers are checking that no trees have been removed without permission, and there will be a plan for the roads and green areas.

**Other Issues**

Youth Facility at School

When the planning application goes in for this, the Parish Council will bring up the potential wider use of this facility.

**Minute 5 (2015/16) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

Requests for dispensations were all received and agreed – which allows all Parish Councillors to discuss the budget, set the precept and discuss Councillors' allowances.

**Minute 6 (2015/16) Gardening/Landscaping Issues**

There is a piece of land in front of Copperfield Court, no one knows who owns it. Councillor Cudmore stated that this would look better if SMBC could arrange for tarmac on it, and then a planter can go on it.

The 4 planters are currently empty, but are due to be planted up in the next 2 weeks. SMBC have suggested that the 2 planters that were moved away from the clock island could be put back, either on the island as before, or set further back along Old Dickens Heath Rd. It was commented that if this is the case, then the cycle friendly works that have been carried out did not need to have been done. The Parish Council agreed that they were all in favour of the 2 planters being put back where they were before. And that the cycle friendly works should be left as they are now, with a gap in the middle, so that cars can still access the parking spaces between the island/planters and the bollards.

The Parish Council will also be planting up 2 of the traffic islands, and seeking sponsorship for them.

### **Minute 7 (2015/16) Report from the Borough Councillors**

Councillor Holt congratulated the new Parish Councillors on their election, and he thanked all the previous Councillors that he has worked with over many years – in particular Vas Arfan and Alyson Glenn with whom he worked in establishing the new Parish Council for Dickens Heath. He said that it is great to see democracy alive and well in the village, and as a Borough Councillor, hopes to work together with the new Parish Council in a positive way.

Councillor Hawkins also extended his congratulations to the new Parish Councillors. With regard to Highways issues, he would like the Borough Councillors to meet with the Parish Council before any meeting with Highways officers – so that we can all speak with one voice. He gave an update on Garden Squares II – Elegant Homes have the development contract, and they have expressed a wish to be 'part of the solution'. Their first aim will be to ensure that contractors' vehicles can be parked in the Garden Squares II car park. They plan to clear the site at the back of Tesco, and create up to 30 additional parking spaces. Traders have also suggested that some timed parking restrictions on Main St could be beneficial, and Councillor Hawkins is getting all of the business' views before approaching the Receivers. In terms of housing developments, he said that there are to be 900 residences at Blythe Valley, which is in Cheswick Green parish. This is 300 more than are in the Solihull Local Plan and so this may assist in defending the Green Belt elsewhere. Solihull MBC should know sometime next month what sort of housing numbers they should be looking at.

Councillor Brown stated that she supported the increase in the number of Councillors for Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green Parish Councils, and therefore she is very pleased to see the additional Councillors in place. She said that, as an Independent, she has been working closely with the Green Party members of the Borough Council and has now been appointed to the Planning Committee and the Licensing Committee. She is also involved with Conservation and historic buildings.

**Minute 8 (2015/16) To Receive all Councillors' Declaration of Acceptance of Office**  
All received.

**Minute 9 (2015/16) To Receive all Councillors' Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Code of Conduct Agreement**  
All received.

**Minute 10 (2015/16) To Decide Whether to Elect a Vice Chair**  
It was decided, with 4 votes in favour, to defer this to the September meeting.

**Minute 11 (2015/16) To Consider whether to accept Councillors' Allowances**  
All were in favour of continuing with the availability of Councillors' allowances. Solihull MBC may not be willing to continue the payment of these through their payroll, due to changes in advice from HMRC. However, it was agreed that the Clerk should ask SMBC in the first instance. If this is not possible, then Diane Malley can run the payroll for the allowances.

**Minute 12 (2015/16) To Consider whether to attend Training for New Councillors**  
It was agreed that all Parish Councillors attend the Induction Day, and Councillor Gussin to attend the Chairmen Training Day.

**Minute 13 (2015/16) To Agree Dates of and Venue for Council Meetings for the Year**  
The proposed schedule was agreed, with meetings to be held on the third Tuesday of each month. In the past, a meeting has not been held during August, but it was agreed that a brief meeting should be held in August – the date to be confirmed later.

**Minute 14 (2015/16) To Resolve Whether to Establish any Committees**

Councillor Eames proposed that there should be a Planning Committee which could also look at the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. All were in favour of this. Members to include Councillors Trevor Eames and Maureen Holloway, resident Jean Walters, and other interested persons.

It was also agreed that there should be regular informal meetings to discuss environmental issues which would then be reported to full Parish Council meetings. Councillors Bob Cudmore, Phil Brandum, Di Potter and Doreen Wright expressed an interest in attending. They plan to start by looking at the traffic islands, Councillor Gussin to join them for this.

**Minute 15 (2015/16) To Appoint Representatives to Sit on Outside Bodies**

Councillors Stephen Gussin and Phil Brandum will attend SAC (Solihull Area Committee) and Councillors Stephen Gussin and Maureen Holloway will attend the Solihull Rural Partnership.

**Minute 16 (2015/16) To Agree Cheque Signatories**

All Councillors to be cheque signatories for the bank account, the Clerk to ensure the paperwork is all completed.

**Minute 17 (2015/16) To Agree to Review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

It was agreed that these should be reviewed at next month's meeting.

**Minute 18 (2015/16) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday April 21<sup>st</sup> 2015**

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

**Minute 19 (2015/16) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting**

Request for a crossing at the Bellway Homes development

SMBC Planning are not in support of this.

Treatment of green mould on block paving

This has still not been done, Matt Gardner is chasing it up.

Garden Squares II update

A revised planning application will include no commercial units, additional residential units plus extra parking behind Tesco.

Footpaths unsafe for wheelchairs

This needs to be followed up with Matt Gardner.

Nature Reserve

This looks awful following the dredging that DHMC have had to do, but DHMC have no funds to improve it further – Councillors Phil Brandum and Bob Cudmore to follow this up.

Cricket Club Grant

They have sent in a progress report. On Facebook Group 'The Only Way is Dickens' there apparently have been comments about a lack of cricket coaches. The Clerk to check that the club have enough cricket coaches to continue the junior coaching during 2015/16, and if so the grant for this year can be forwarded to the Club.

Parish Rooms annual service charge

A breakdown of the service charge for 2015 has been circulated, the Parish Council asked to see the breakdown for 2014 so that a comparison can be made.

Parish Rooms contract for electricity

The transfer to British Gas is in progress.

Village Memorial

The order for the memorial has been placed, and now needs to be progressed with Planning.

### **Minute 20 (2015/16) Planning Applications**

Four planning applications involve the conversion of farm buildings at Whitlocks End Farm. 3 of the 4 buildings are currently permanently occupied, and are in Green Belt. If an application had been made for permanent houses originally, planning consent would not have been given. But if they have been used for 4 years, and there has been no enforcement, this is deemed to be approval. Therefore SMBC will find it difficult to oppose these applications. No comments to be made on any of the planning applications.

### **Minute 21 (2015/16) Financial Matters**

Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Brandum, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the May 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 Agenda be approved – 12 cheques and 3 direct debits totalling £5,452.34. This included an additional cheque for £180 for an Induction Day for new Councillors.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £104,900 and is projecting a surplus of £78,000 at the year end.

The internal audit went well. It was agreed that the recommendations included in the Audit Report should be highlighted and reviewed at next month's meeting along with the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Councillor Cudmore thanked the Clerk for another excellent audit.

The Risk Assessment and Management document 2015/16 was approved.

The Annual Return for 2014/15 was approved and signed by the Chairman and Clerk/RFO.

### **Minute 22 (2015/16) Parish Rooms**

The new Dickens Heath Scout Group have asked whether they can held quarterly meetings for the leaders in the Parish Rooms. This was agreed.

A group of jazz musicians have also asked whether they can hold rehearsals for acoustic guitars and vocals in the Parish Rooms. The Parish Council felt that the noise would potentially be a problem for residents, and so felt they could not approve this.

### **Minute 23 (2015/16) Decision Making in Meetings**

All Parish Councillors agreed that decisions should be put to the vote, and the number of votes recorded.

### **Minute 24 (2015/16) The Future of the Parish Rooms**

Councillor Brandum stated that the previous Parish Council had been pleased and proud of the Parish Rooms. But also that, if the library is under threat, a move to the library could be a possible way forward. The Parish Council will need to put together a 5 year plan first, which will take into account the future precept from the new dwellings under construction. Once this has been done, a capital repayment on the mortgage for the Parish Rooms can be considered. It was agreed that the Clerk should meet with Councillors Stephen Gussin, Phil Brandum, Bob Cudmore and Di Potter to put together the 5 year plan.

### **Minute 25 (2015/16) Parking Restrictions and Parking at Whitlocks End Train Station**

Councillor Eames reported that Whitlocks End car park is at capacity, and residents are concerned about the threat of being ticketed if cars are not parked properly within the lines. Centro are looking at extending parking at some of their sites, and they already own the land adjacent to Whitlocks End – which could provide around another 270 spaces, but this is Green Belt land. The cost per space at this site looks to be better value than other sites under consideration. The community, and users of the train station, are signing a petition to demonstrate support for an expansion of parking - SMBC is not as yet in support of this. The Parish Council were all in support of this in principle, and all agreed that Councillor Eames should draft a letter of support.

**Minute 26 (2015/16) Griffin Lane Flood Defence Fencing**

This should already have been landscaped by the developer. Matt Gardner is chasing them up.

**Minute 27 (2015/16) Letters of Concern from Residents**

Concern has been expressed about litter in the canal. It was agreed that Stephen, the Parish Council litter picker, should not pick litter from the water as it is a health and safety risk. The Clerk to contact the Canals Trust to find out what can be done.

**Minute 28 (2015/16) Improving Corporate Identity & Accessibility of Councillors to Residents**

Councillor Gussin proposed that councillors should have their own business cards, with parish council email addresses, the office address and phone number, and their own phone contact details if they wish. He also proposed that photos of councillors should be included on the website. This will all greatly improve the accessibility of councillors to residents. This was agreed.

**Minute 29 (2015/16) Village Survey**

It was agreed that a period of notice should be posted - that the survey is going to close, and that information be collated for the next meeting.

**Minute 30 (2015/16) Village Green and Playground**

Dickens Heath Management Co. have no budget to replace the elderly play equipment on the Village Green, and they approached the Parish Council for a contribution. The former Parish Council felt that both the playground and the Village Green should be in public ownership. The starting point was that the Village Green and playground is a liability for the Receivers, but the Receivers have asked that the Parish Council make an offer. The Dickens Heath Village Green is not currently protected under village green regulations. All agreed, with a show of hands, that this should be pursued. Councillor Cudmore has spoken to a valuer who said that it would be very difficult to put a value on the Village Green. It was agreed that the Chairman should speak to Nicola Fagan at DHMC about this, the Clerk to find copies of all the correspondence. It was acknowledged that there will be costs in transferring the land, and so this will need to be built into any offer.

**Minute 31 (2015/16) Meetings with SMBC Officers/DHMC Officers**

The Parish Council agreed that they wish to meet with Matt Gardner and Kath Hemmings of SMBC plus Barbara Cooper of DHMC on a monthly basis. Every other month, they would like the meetings to also include Nicola Fagan and Denny of GBR Phoenix Beard. Councillor Brandum also stated that he has been discussing the local lettings policy with SMBC, but for personal reasons he will need to pass this over to another Councillor.

**Minute 32 (2015/16) Parliamentary Election Results**

It was agreed that a letter of congratulations to the Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP should be drafted, and that the Parish Council would like to invite her to a future meeting.

**Minute 33 (2015/16) Correspondence**20 mph pilots

SMBC have carried out and assessed 2 pilots of 20mph schemes. However, they have no budget available for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final pilot. Until this has taken place, SMBC will not consider any requests for 20mph speed limits.

**Minute 34 (2015/16) Items for next agenda**

Andrew Simpkins to talk about the Festival on the Green on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2015.  
Dickens Heath Football Club.

**Meeting ended 9.55pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday June 16<sup>th</sup> 2015: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms**

Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015

Signature.....

Date.....