

# The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday October 18<sup>th</sup> 2016 in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

### **Present:**

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

Borough Councillors; Richard Holt

8 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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### **Minute 87 (2016/17) Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **Minute 88 (2016/17) Public Participation**

#### New Parish Councillors

The Chair welcomed newly co-opted Parish Councillors David Jones, Jill Lovett and Alan Scholes to their first Parish Council meeting and, at the request of a resident, all of the Parish Councillors introduced themselves.

#### Anti-Social Behaviour

Two residents of Hirdemons Way explained their concerns about anti-social behaviour. They had a lot of problems last year with food being thrown at their house and cars, and a car had been broken into last week. When food is thrown hard at their house in the early hours, it is very frightening. They have reported all of the crimes and incidents to the Police, been given crime numbers, and the Police said that they would come out to see them – but this hasn't happened. The Parish Council agreed that they had not received the response from the Police that they deserve and this would be followed up.

#### Vandalism at the Cricket Club (Dickens Heath Sports Club)

A resident has heard that, on Friday night, the metal shutters on the new facilities at the Cricket Club were vandalised and broken. The Clerk to follow this up with the Cricket Club.

#### Memorial

A resident suggested that, if the Parish Council were rethinking the memorial – then perhaps they could consider placing a bench there so that residents had somewhere to sit.

#### Parking on Dickens Heath Road

Vehicles are being parked on Dickens Heath Road, on the bend opposite the Village Green - this is a bus route and it is causing problems. Councillor Trevor Eames said that SMBC Highways have just reviewed the second phase of double yellow lines in the village, and as they have a long list of areas to look at – realistically, Dickens Heath are not likely to get another review in the near future. It was agreed that this issue could potentially be incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan, and the Clerk to contact Matt Gardner about putting some polite letters through the letter boxes of neighbouring properties.

### **Minute 89 (2016/17) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

Requests for dispensations have been received from the 3 newly co-opted Parish Councillors. These were agreed – and will allow the Councillors to discuss the budget, set the precept and discuss Councillors' allowances.

### **Minute 90 (2016/17) Report from the Borough Councillors**

Councillor Holt gave an update about HS2 – Royal Assent is likely towards the end of the year, but the line will affect the North of the Borough rather than the area local to Dickens Heath. He also gave an update about the Combined Authority, and said that he appreciated the opportunity to have some input into the Dickens Heath Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Minute 91 (2016/17) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday September 20<sup>th</sup> 2016**

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

### **Minute 92 (2016/17) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting**

#### Youth Group

The Youth Group are very grateful for the Parish Council's offer to fund 50% of their bowling evening – the total cost has been estimated at £152.

#### Parish Rooms Risk Assessment

The Clerk has met with Gloria Macken about an up to date risk assessment that covers pre school children. Gloria is looking into some solutions for the blinds.

#### Replanted Traffic Islands

The weeds are still evident on the islands. It was agreed that the invoice should not be paid yet, and the Solihull Rangers be asked to look again at the problem.

#### Youth Facility Consultation

Chris Barr has requested a meeting to give the Parish Council the feedback from the Consultation. This will be arranged for November.

#### Welcome to the Village Signs

Matt Gardner's update is that three of the signs are now in place, and the fourth will be installed once the work on the new developments is complete. The old signs are also due to be removed. There was some debate about these signs, and that one of them has already been bumped – the Clerk to let Matt Gardner know.

#### Anti-Social Behaviour

The Parish Council has applied to a Police fund for a grant to extend the CCTV in the village.

#### Remembrance Sunday Service

Plans are progressing – Rev Theresa Jones and Andrew Simpkins of the 2 churches are agreeing the service, the road closure documents have been sent to SMBC, Councillor Maureen Holloway has arranged for access to the library and its bell tower, and Elegant Homes have agreed to loan some barriers for the road closures.

#### Halloween 2016

A Police presence in Dickens Heath has been requested for Halloween. The Sergeant has replied that the Rural team are on duty and will do their utmost to weight patrols towards Dickens Heath.

### **Minute 93 (2016/17) Planning Applications**

Planning application 2016/02456 for a proposed external steel flue at 7 Whitchurch Lane was discussed and it was agreed that an objection should be sent in – Councillor Trevor Eames to draft a response.

An additional planning application was also discussed. This was planning application 2016/02606 - to fell 2 protected oak trees at 102 Birchy Close. The applicant had recently obtained planning consent for a replacement extension, but there had been no mention of the trees (actually a single tree with a split trunk). Now there is an application to remove the tree as it is too close to the new extension. Jean Walters, of the Planning Sub-Committee, has been to have a look at the tree – and it is a good specimen. Even if there is a split in the trunk, oak trees can heal and it doesn't affect the longevity of the tree. Planning should not have allowed the extension without considering the tree. It was agreed that Planning Sub-Committee should consider a response.

No comments on the other planning applications.

### **Minute 94 (2016/17) Planning Sub-Committee**

A meeting was held last week regarding the Neighbourhood Plan, with 10 people attending. Officers and roles were decided, with Councillor Trevor Eames being Chairman initially.

They looked at the draft questionnaire, will work on it further at the next meeting, and then will contact WALC for the free Planning advice.

It has been agreed that meetings will be held approximately monthly, on a Monday evening – as the Parish Rooms are free at this time. The support and enthusiasm for the project has been very pleasing.

Jean Walters added that the new Planning and Housing bill will speed up the Neighbourhood Plan process. This is good news as the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan needs to be in tandem with the emerging Solihull Local Plan.

### **Minute 95 (2016/17) SMBC Highway Adoptions**

Two sections of highway have now been signed off as adopted.

- Old Dickens Heath Road, from the clock to Hirdemonsway – although the footpath and hedgerow have not been adopted and will stay the responsibility of RMG. This is the hedge that a resident complains about, and so it was agreed that a copy of the adoptions paperwork should be sent to him.
- Rumbush Lane, from Gorcott Lane past Waterside and halfway to the next island. This includes the island at Waterside and so the double yellow lines will be enforceable – those parking there need to be warned that the double yellow lines will be enforced once the gaps have been completed.

### **Minute 96 (2016/17) Village Issues**

#### Hanging Baskets

Some of the hanging baskets have been removed but not all of them – the Clerk to follow this up with Plantscape.

#### Memorial

The quote for around £12,000 doesn't include any groundworks or landscaping. The Parish Council has a reserve of £12,000 but this will not be enough. Councillor Doreen Wright said that the total cost is likely to be £15,000 and Councillor Di Potter said that this is too much. Councillor Jill Lovett agreed that it is too expensive, she likes the idea of a bench – which could still have the poem on it. Councillor David Jones said that a memorial is the heart and soul of a village in many cases, and he feels that it needs to be longer lasting than a bench, and it needs to be a focal point for the village. Councillor Maureen Holloway suggested that this could be a beautiful piece of stone with the poem on it. Councillor David Jones asked whether the chosen site was the best location for a memorial. Councillors Trevor Eames, Jill Lovett and Maureen Holloway commented that the site is central to the village and as such is the right place. Councillor Alan Scholes felt that laying a wreath on a planter, as has been the case to date, lacks dignity.

The discussion didn't result in any consensus, and so it was agreed that the Clerk would look up the dimensions of the current design, and that Councillor Jill Lovett (who is carrying out a study on historic signs) would bring some photos to the next meeting.

### **Minute 97 (2016/17) Reports from Councillors who have attended Outside Groups**

#### Partnership Forum

Councillor Doreen Wright attended this, where there was a very interesting presentation on how Social Services, the Police and Housing Committee were addressing anti-social behaviour and problem families.

#### Library Consultation on October 17<sup>th</sup> 2016 between 5.30 and 8pm

Not many people had been in to the library to participate, a report on the results will be made available at some point in the future. One of the comments about Dickens Heath Library was that the Parish Council could occupy the upstairs space. Dickens Heath library is the most expensive library in the Borough, and they have been looking to find better use of the premises, and the Parish Council could potentially relocate to the first floor. While the Parish Council will bear this in mind, it would not be commercially viable to sell the Parish Rooms at this time.

**Minute 98 (2016/17) Arrangements for Remembrance Sunday**

Arrangements for Remembrance Sunday are now in progress. The Chair will attend the Service in Dickens Heath, and so Councillor Trevor Eames will attend the Service in the centre of Solihull. It was therefore agreed that 2 wreaths would be required. The Parish Council has been given permission to access the bell tower, and it is therefore hoped that the Last Post can be played from the top of the bell tower.

**Minute 99 (2016/17) Financial Matters**

Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Lovett, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the October 18<sup>th</sup> 2016 Agenda be approved – 16 payments totalling £4,843.71.

- The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £108,000, and is projecting a surplus of almost £75,000 at the year end.
- Councillor Di Potter confirmed that the financial statements reconciled to the bank statement as at September 30<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- A meeting to discuss the budget and precept for 2017/18 was agreed for Wednesday December 7<sup>th</sup> 2016.
- The external audit for 2015/16 has been satisfactorily concluded, with just a comment regarding clarifying the process for authorisation of the Annual Return in the minutes.
- It was agreed that the bank mandate be amended to include all current Parish Councillors as signatories, to remove the ex Councillors and update it for the change in Chair.
- The direct debit for Opus Energy was signed.

**Minute 100 (2016/17) Parish Council's Pensions Obligations**

Dickens Heath Parish Council's staging date for Pensions Auto Enrolment is July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017. There are 3 categories of worker, depending on age and earnings, and the Parish Council has 3 employees. The Clerk is an 'eligible jobholder', such workers have to be automatically enrolled and the Clerk is a member of the West Midlands Pension Fund. Admin assistant Hannah and litter picker Simon are 'entitled workers'. Such workers must be offered a qualifying pension scheme, the Parish Council is not obligated to contribute as the employer. It was agreed that the model letter to notify workers about the NEST pension scheme should be sent to Hannah and Simon in the New Year. It was also agreed that the Parish Council would not make an employer's contribution if a NEST pension scheme is set up.

The Clerk has also attended a West Midlands Pension Fund Seminar, as the Parish Council is an employer within the fund as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2016. In the past, they had required employers to submit an annual return for reconciliation purposes, but this will be required monthly as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2017.

**Minute 101 (2016/17) Feedback from Festival on the Green**

The Parish Council donated £250 towards the costs of the Festival on the Green, and so has received a statement of the income and expenditure. The organisers thanked the Parish Council for their sponsorship and support. Councillor Trevor Eames was present at the event and said how impressed he was by the work put in to ensure its success.

**Minute 102 (2016/17) Donation for the Village Christmas Tree**

The Village Christmas tree costs in the region of £100, the Parish Council agreed that they would once again meet the cost of this. The tree lighting will be taking place on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016.

**Minute 103 (2016/17) Correspondence**Consultation on Council Tax Referendum Proposals for 2017/18

The Government is consulting on a proposal that council tax referendum principles are introduced for parish councils with a total precept for 2016/17 of at least £500,000 and a Band D precept higher than £75.46. Dickens Heath Parish Council's precept is nowhere near

these, the Band D precept is £39.91, but it would set a precedent. It was agreed that no response to the consultation should be made.

Playground on Village Green

A resident has contacted the Parish Council about the village playground being in a terrible condition and needing to be upgraded. She is going to speak to Barbara at DHMC about residents possibly raising some funds towards this. It was agreed that this was not something that the Parish Council should get involved with.

An Approach from Tidbury Green PC about Possible Collaboration over Common Issues

It was agreed that it would be a good idea to meet with Tidbury Green Parish Councillors to discuss common issues and problems.

Local Community Pharmacy Service

Caroline Spelman MP will raise the Parish Council's concerns directly with the Secretary of State.

Kent's Barbers Pole

A resident has reported that the pole is very noisy once again, Kent's to be asked again to have the pole serviced.

Letter in Solihull News

A letter from the Chair has been forwarded to the Solihull News in response to the derogatory letter from a resident who is not known to the Parish Council.

**Minute 104 (2016/17) Items for Next Agenda**

Memorial, Noticeboard at the School.

**Minute 105 (2016/17) 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 106 (2016/17) Traders' Temporary Parking in the Village Centre**

Councillor Trevor Eames has produced a statement which summarises the implementation of the temporary parking proposal. It was agreed that this statement should be published on the website.

**Minute 107 (2016/17) Draft Letter to Resident**

This was agreed.

**Meeting ended 9.55pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday November 15<sup>th</sup> 2016: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms**