

Parish Council News – May 2017

Parish Council Meetings

The Parish Council's next meetings are the Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday May 2nd 2017 – this is the annual meeting for residents, we will be welcoming both representatives of the Police and St Patrick's Church to speak and answer questions, and the meeting will be followed by our usual refreshments; and then the Annual Meeting of the Council (AGM) will be held on Tuesday May 16th 2017. Both meetings start at 7pm in the Parish Rooms. Please come and join us.

Chair's Review of the Year 2016/17

This has been a year of change for the Parish Council, but also one of significant achievement. The year began with the resignation of 3 Parish Councillors, and so 3 new Parish Councillors were co-opted in the Autumn and they have quickly settled into their roles. Every one of the Parish Councillors has been very involved in the work of the Parish Council, progressing different issues, and I would like to thank them for all of their hard work and dedication.

Much progress has been made to improve the appearance of our village - the Parish Council funded the landscaping of three of the islands with low maintenance planting, and negotiated the cleansing of the block paving around the islands and the on-going maintenance which involves manual brushing and algae treatment. The Parish Council's part time litter picker already enhances the service provided by SMBC and Dickens Heath Management Co, and March 2017 saw the first Literary Litter Pickers community litter pick. This was organised by the Parish Council, in conjunction with SMBC, and was based at the library. The first litter pick was an incredible success – many residents, the Scouts and their leaders volunteered. In total around 50 people helped, really enjoyed it, and collected 19 full bags of rubbish for SMBC to remove. As a result of this success, monthly community litter picks have now been planned. Following on from this, in early April there was a clean up of the Nature Reserve, which the Parish Council organised with the assistance of a Solihull MBC Ecologist. Residents, Scouts and Solihull Conservation Volunteers helped to improve pathways, remove plastic tree supports and generally tidy up. Having been slightly disappointed with the new 'Welcome to Dickens Heath' signs that have been installed in the last year, and having seen that Chadwick End had some far more attractive gated signs, we have requested similar ones for Dickens Heath - which the Parish Council will fund and Solihull MBC has agreed to install.

Having made these improvements, the Parish Council is now looking to enhance the annual floral displays in the village. We have registered with the RHS Britain in Bloom - the hanging baskets have again been ordered, and we have plans to add to these using the planters, and various bits of land around Dickens Heath – we look forward to a spectacular summer! We would very much like this to become an on-going community project, and would welcome the involvement of any interested residents.

In November 2016, we helped to organise another very successful Remembrance Sunday Service which was held in the village centre. The event gets better every year, with more residents in attendance, and this year the highlights included a bugler playing the Last Post from the top of the bell tower. Plans for a memorial opposite the library and Tesco have been under discussion by the Parish Council for several years now, and this year significant progress has been made with the purchase of a memorial stone and the submission of a planning application for it in April 2017.

The consultation on the Solihull Local Plan Review caused significant concern for residents of Dickens Heath during the year – with the addition of 2 proposed sites for further development of a significant number of new homes. The Parish Councillors all dedicated a significant amount of time to seek the views of residents, via a survey, and to make a response on the basis of our residents' views. We are still awaiting the results of the consultation.

Another significant concern of residents has been parking problems in the village centre. The arrival of Elegant Homes to complete the development of the village centre and Garden Squares II was very welcome – as the unfinished building site had been an eyesore for too long. However, the building work has brought increased parking pressures. The Parish Council has worked very hard, in conjunction with Elegant Homes and Dickens Heath Management Co, to provide a solution. The current solution, which is temporary, has seen Elegant Homes willing to fund the provision of 41 underground car parking spaces for traders – which frees up spaces in the surface car parks for residents and shoppers. This is working successfully, has made a big difference to the difficult parking situation, and we are very grateful to all those who have helped to make this happen.

The Parish Council continues to be involved in trying to improve facilities for the young people of Dickens Heath. We continue to participate in discussions about a potential youth/community facility at Dickens Heath School. The Parish Council is also involved in discussions with Dickens Heath Sports Club, who have some wonderful new facilities just outside the village. The Parish Council have liaised with Dickens Heath Football Club, who will be relocating to the Sports Club in order to be based nearer to Dickens Heath. And Dickens Heath Youth Group, currently based at the Parish Rooms, are also looking at Dickens Heath Sports Club with regard to potentially using it as a more suitable base for their activities.

Another on-going concern for residents with young families is the playground with its dated equipment. The Village Green and playground is currently owned by the Parkridge Receivers, but the Parish Council feel that they should be in public hands, and therefore have begun fresh negotiations about acquiring the Village Green and playground.

The Parish Council is also forging closer links with St Patrick's Church regarding an Anglican Church presence in the village. And we have again provided various grants during 2016/17. This year we were pleased to provide support for Dickens Heath Youth Group, Festival on the Green and have agreed to support Dickens Heath Football Club.

I would again like to thank my fellow Councillors for their hard work in the community during the past year, and also to thank all of the village residents for your input during the year – from attending our monthly meetings to completing our survey and contacting us about village issues, we very much appreciate your involvement.

Maureen Holloway

Chair, Dickens Heath Parish Council.

Contact Us:

Dickens Heath Parish Council Tel: 07772 469271, Email: dickensheathpc@hotmail.com
www.dickensheathpc.org.uk 1 Wharf House, Waterside, Dickens Heath, Solihull B90 1UE