

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting to discuss Issues of Concern in Dickens Heath - held on Tuesday September 25th 2012 at 4.00pm in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Philip Brandum, Alyson Glenn, Richard Holt (Chairman), Josh O'Nyons.

SMBC Councillors; Linda Brown, Brian Burgess

SMBC Officers; Chris Barr, Jim Harte, Mike Swallow

Neighbourhood Co-Ordinator; Matt Gardner

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Councillor Holt thanked everyone for attending and outlined the concerns that the Parish Council have – that many residents are complaining about non maintenance in the village, that the Parish Council is trying to take positive action but has not been allowed to tidy up the private land and the hanging baskets have been overshadowed by their scruffy surroundings.

1. The Development Agreement for Dickens Heath, Adoption of the Roads and Traffic Islands, Garden Squares phase 2

Mr Swallow summarized the current situation: Parkridge has been in liquidation since 2011 and BNP Paribas have been appointed to dispose of the assets – Garden Squares and the area at the back of Tesco. A preferred developer to take this on has been selected and has had some pre planning discussions. This developer wishes to tweak some of the planning approval already in place and a planning application is expected by the end of the year for these. With amended planning approval, the sites would then transfer to this developer. Councillor Holt suggested that if no developer was prepared to take on this site, then Solihull MBC has a responsibility to step in and compulsorily purchase it. The SMBC officers felt that in the current climate, public funds could not be used to purchase the site. Mr Swallow agreed to keep the Parish Council updated on this.

The scruffy hoardings around Garden Squares phase 2 should be sorted out by the new developer, assuming that this goes ahead.

The question was raised of whether an insurance backed bond existed to complete the highways. Mr Harte stated that there is no financial surety to bring the road network up to standard. However, the roads do not need too much work to be brought up to standard - the Consortium will be carrying out this work in the next 2 months and then the roads can be adopted.

The imprinting work was brought forward to improve the appearance of the roads, but this is now looking tired. Generally it is in good condition, so SMBC plan to reinstate the imprinting in Spring 2013.

Mr Barr stated that the 2 unadopted, very untidy, traffic islands will be tidied up in the next 2 weeks. After that, SMBC will maintain them even though they are unadopted. The Parish Council to discuss planting out these islands with Mr Barr.

The problem moss on the block paving will be tackled with an enhanced service.

Buckridge Lane has a continual problem with litter – it needs a bin.

The walkway along the village side of the canal is very overgrown. This currently belongs to the Consortium, but will be adopted. Mr Barr will update the Parish Council as to when the cutting back work can be done.

Street furniture will be placed on their cleaning programme.

The installation of the village clock is due to start on October 9th 2012 with completion due mid November 2012.

Councillor Burgess asked whether young offenders would be able to repaint the scruffy hoardings, and agreed to ask Kath Hemmings to include it as a priority on the action plan. Mr Swallow to check with the administrators that the hoardings are safe.

2. Griffin Lane Development/Opportunity for a Youth Facility

Mr Barr has been in discussion with planning about whether the Griffin Lane development could provide access to a youth facility in the country park. He stated that space is restricted in the area around this proposed development. There is a local nature reserve and ancient hedgerow round the edge and it is not feasible for the developer to rearrange the properties to give space for a youth facility. The country park is a designated local nature reserve and planning have advised that a youth facility cannot be sited there. The balancing pond and stream also are health and safety issues for young people – there is very strict guidance on where youth facilities can be located. Mr Barr is still in discussion about this – but it is difficult.

It was agreed that SMBC would continue to explore different options, including:

- ◆ leasing some land
- ◆ the school site
- ◆ the country park
- ◆ part of Garden Squares phase 2
- ◆ something radical!

3. Car Parking

Parking is a problem – there is underuse of the underground car parks, double yellow lines are ignored and cars parking on the traffic islands are a health and safety risk. Parking permits were suggested.

Mr Harte agreed that they would have a 'blitz' on parking.

The Borough Officers agreed to keep the Parish Council regularly updated on all of these issues.