

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday July 15th 2014 at 7.30pm in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Philip Brandum (Chairman), Robert Cudmore, Alyson Glenn, Richard Holt(from 8pm).

11 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 20 (2014/15) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Councillor O'Nyons and from Councillor Holt for the early part of the meeting.

Minute 21 (2014/15) Public Participation

Update on Parish Council

It was explained that Councillor Holt has been elected to the Borough Council, and so has stepped down as Parish Council Chairman but will be staying on as a Parish Councillor. All seats on the Parish Council will be up for election in May 2015.

Additional PCSO hours in Dickens Heath

Councillor Brandum met with Sergeant Saunders – who wasn't optimistic about the police making any additional funds available. PCSOs generally are only funded until February 2015, unless the Government decides to extend this funding. The Parish Council could discuss providing some funding, and village businesses may be willing to contribute as well. However, Sergeant Saunders did reiterate that crime in Dickens Heath is sporadic and statistically low, with transient gangs tending to come in from further afield – which is difficult for police to deal with. Additional PCSO hours may not impact on this. It was agreed that Sergeant Saunders should be invited to a future Parish Council meeting.

Overgrown Hedges

Bushes are very overgrown on the approach to Akamba from Dickens Heath. Solihull MBC will not be cutting back until the bird nesting season is over (they are barred from doing so by The Wildlife and Countryside Act) – which will be late summer. It was agreed that if people have to go into the road because bushes are so overgrown, then the Village Handyman would trim them back.

Acoustic Guitar Group

Simeon Packard discussed the possibility of setting up a local guitar forum in the Parish Rooms. He has been a member of a Shirley group for 20 years – for those who enjoy playing and listening to guitar, and to meet like minded people. It would be for players of all abilities, including beginners.

Sponsorship of Traffic Island

A resident has a landscaping business and has offered to sponsor the Dickens Heath Road island, the first as you come in from Tidbury Green. They would maintain it and add a plaque with their business name. The Clerk to look into this with SMBC.

Hanging Baskets

A resident commented that the hanging baskets are looking really lovely.

Apartments at Clock Island

The apartments behind the clock are looking scruffy, with external windows not cleaned for several years. They are due to be cleaned up soon.

Garden Squares II

The latest statement from officers at SMBC is that it is difficult to obtain a commitment to a timescale for completion of Garden Squares II, but there is progress towards finishing off the highway works that need to be completed. There has been no reply to the Parish Council letter to the interim Chief Executive at SMBC. It was agreed that the Parish Council should write again to the new Chief Executive.

Solihull Local Plan – Judicial Review

A developer put in an appeal against the Solihull Local Plan, challenging the housing figures in the Plan's 5 year housing land supply. The appeal was upheld on the basis that Solihull MBC had used historic housing figures that were now deemed to be too low. SMBC do not now have enough houses in their 5 year plan and so they have brought forward the developments in Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green to bridge the gap.

Minute 22 (2014/15) Gardening Club

Following the failure to plant trees on the patch of grass at Trundalls Lane due to a layer of concrete, it was agreed that the Parish Council would fund a raised bed there. The Managing Company have given their permission.

The Village Handyman will also be weeding the traffic island at Dickens Heath Rd/Calcutt Way.

Minute 23 (2014/15) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

Councillor Holt declared a personal interest when the youth club was discussed, as his son is a member.

Minute 24 (2014/15) To Decide Whether to Elect a Vice Chair

This was again postponed because not all 5 Councillors were present.

Minute 25 (2014/15) To Agree Time and Dates of Council Meetings for the Year

It was agreed that meetings for the coming year should be held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, apart from in December, and the start time should be at the earlier time of 7pm.

Minute 26 (2014/15) To Receive a Report from the Borough Councillors

Councillor Holt, newly elected as a Borough Councillor, will be sitting on the Economic Development and Community Care Committees. He is already emphasizing to the Borough Council that Dickens Heath must be finished off, particularly since it is taking the pain of further development. It was agreed that another letter be sent to the new Chief Executive of SMBC.

Minute 27 (2014/15) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday May 27th 2014

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

Minute 28 (2014/15) Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Tue May 27th 2014

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

Minute 29 (2014/15) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meetings

Tree Preservation Orders on Oaks on Cleobury Lane

After trees were felled at Braggs Farm Lane, SMBC are trying to conserve trees at proposed development sites.

Closure of Blackford Rd for the summer

Severn Trent have apologized and state that they are doing all they can to complete the work as soon as possible.

Parking Restrictions

The double yellow lines along Rumbush Lane as you turn left from the clock island need extending. The traffic management team will be reviewing this.

Renewed Request for a Pedestrian Crossing near the clock island

Solihull MBC have again responded that it isn't feasible due to the layout of the roads and pavements.

Potential Increase in the number of Parish Councillors

The effective management of the Parish Council is compromised if there are 3 absences, as happened recently. If the number of parish councillors were to be increased from 5 to 7, it would enable a larger group to be part of decision making.

If a formal request is made to Deborah Merry at SMBC by September, then it should be possible to increase the number of parish councillors for the May 2015 elections. It was agreed that a formal request be made – the Clerk to seek advice from Cheswick Green PC who have just had approval to increase their number of parish councillors from 5 to 7.

Overgrown Hedges

Councillor Cudmore and Village Handyman Mike have cut back the holly bush at Whitlocks End. There is also a bush on the corner at the clock island – opposite the 'library' – that needs cutting back because it is a blind spot. The Clerk to ask the Neighbourhood Co-ordinator about a permanent modification to this bush. There are more overgrown bushes on Rumbush Lane towards Hirdemons Way.

Youth Club

Those who run the youth club hold a quarterly update meeting, and Councillor Glenn is welcome to attend the next one.

Village Playground

The surface has been repaired and there are no health and safety concerns about the equipment – it is just old and out-dated.

Steps to Canal Side Walk by Clock Island

There have been few responses to the notice that Taylor Wimpey wish to remove these steps – even after an extended consultation period – therefore they will be removed in the near future. The Parish Council accepted this decision.

New Canal Culvert Screen

SMBC have confirmed that work is due to start on the new culvert screen very soon.

Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Brandum has discussed the production of a Neighbourhood Plan with the Chairman of Cheswick Green PC, who have started the process. Now that it is highly likely that the Dickens Heath developments will be approved in the near future, it was agreed that it would be a waste of time and resources to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. It is a process that takes 18 months to 2 years, and the developments will be approved well before then. It was also agreed that a halt should be called, for the moment, to any work that Stansgate Planning are carrying out jointly for Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green Parish Councils.

Minute 30 (2014/15) Planning Applications

There were 2 additional planning applications:

2014/1131 - 40 to 50 Whitchurch Lane - Cut back branches of ash and oak trees overhanging numbers 40 to 50 by 2 – 3 metres.

2014/1066 - David Wilson Homes proposed development at Braggs Farm Lane.

There were no comments on the planning applications, other than the Parish Council's view that the housing developments would be better on a phased basis.

Minute 31 (2014/15) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Glenn, seconded by Councillor Brandum, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the July 15th 2014 Agenda be approved – 5 cheques totalling £1,230.59 relating to June payments and 21 cheques totalling £5,074.10 for July/August payments. This included 4 additional cheques totalling £3,023.47 for the hanging baskets and railings baskets.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £80,679 and is projecting a surplus of £71,000 at the year end. Recent receipts include a VAT reclaim in excess of £5,000 and a £50 donation to gardening club.

Minute 32 (2014/15) Proposals for Further Development

Realistically, this is now a fait accompli. SMBC have made the decision to bring forward the Dickens Heath and Cheswick Green developments. Any further objections are unlikely to change the decision, and therefore no further funds should be committed at this stage. The Parish Council still agree that the developments would be better on a phased basis, but the priority now is to secure as much local benefit as possible by working with the planners and developers. Catesby, who have drawn up the plans for the Cleobury Lane site, have discussed with the Parish Council the contributions they will be making – to education services, maintenance of open spaces, bus services, the local health centre, drainage, traffic calming, and a contribution to a biodiversity initiative.

Minute 33 (2014/15) Village Green Playground

The question of whether the Parish Council should take over the management and funding of the playground was discussed. Maintenance is currently funded by Dickens Heath Management Co. via the service charge on the commercial properties and some apartments. The Parish Council agreed that it wasn't fair for these few service charge payers to fund the playground when the whole village could use it. DHMC cannot afford to upgrade the play equipment, and the Parish Council fear that if the equipment deteriorates, then DHMC will simply take it out. Should the Parish Council also discuss taking over the Village Green? It was agreed that discussions should be initiated on taking over responsibility for the playground in the first instance.

Minute 34 (2014/15) Review of the Annual Parish Meeting

All agreed that this had gone well.

Minute 35 (2014/15) Internal Auditor's Report 2013/14

This was approved and the recommendations noted.

Minute 36 (2014/15) Requests for Donations

The Library has requested a donation towards their 10 year anniversary celebrations. All agreed a donation of £100. The Parkridge model of the village centre has now been moved to the library.

To mark the beginning of World War 1, a resident has planted up troughs of poppies which have looked magnificent around the tree opposite the Chalice. The Parish Council agreed to fund the cost of these – which was £204.41.

Minute 37 (2014/15) The Parish Rooms

The Parish Council agreed the use of the Parish Rooms for a guitar café as discussed during public participation.

Minute 38 (2014/15) Ongoing References

Youth Club

The numbers have been dropping, which may be due to a lack of continuity – it has been cancelled when the youth worker has been on holiday. It was agreed that this issue needs to be managed, the Parish Council would like to be involved. Councillors Glenn and Brandum will attend the next quarterly Youth Club meeting.

Planting of Roundabouts

The 2 unadopted roundabouts are very uninspiring – photos to be forwarded to SMBC.

Minute 39 (2014/15) Correspondence

Rural Grass Cutting

SMBC are trying to encourage wild flowers in rural areas, and so rural grass verges will have a main cut only at the end of the summer.

Updated Planning Committee Handbook May 2014

Changes have been made regarding public speaking at Planning Committee – a Parish Councillor (or representative) may now address Committee for 4 minutes.

Minute 40 (2014/15) Items for next agenda

None.

Meeting ended 9.50 pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday September 23rd 2014: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms

Private Section

Minute 41 (2014/15) Youth Facility

This was discussed.

Minute 42 (2014/15) Handyman Hours

This was discussed.

Meeting ended 9.50 pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday September 23rd 2014: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms