

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday January 19th 2016 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.

Borough Councillors; Linda Brown, Richard Holt

Rev. Peter Law Jones

19 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 187 (2015/16) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 188 (2015/16) Rev. Peter Law Jones - Anglican Church

Rev. Peter Law Jones is the team rector of Salter St & Shirley Parish which includes Dickens Heath. At the Remembrance Sunday service, Rev. Theresa Jones was discussing the possibility of a Church of England presence in the village with some of the Parish Councillors, and they would like to gauge whether there is any desire for this. If this is the case, then he would be very willing to help make it happen, with possibly a facility at the library. Andrew Simpkins is the pastor at Dickens Heath Village Church, and the 2 churches do already work together. Councillor Phil Brandum asked what the relationship would be between their church and Dickens Heath Village Church. Rev Jones said that the difference is of style and preference, and the approach to worship. They do not see it as being about competition – but as offering choice, with common ground, partnership and community based activities to enrich and compliment each other. For example, in the long run, an established Church of England would be able to offer weddings and christenings. A resident suggested that all religions should be welcomed and working together in the community. Rev Jones agreed that they would be open and inviting to all. Rev. Jones would like to progress a conversation about this possibility and would be interested in any comments, and is happy to answer any questions.

Minute 189 (2015/16) Public Participation

For Sale and To Let Signs

These make the village look really untidy – is it illegal to put them all up? This can be checked with SMBC. The leases for Garden Squares forbid it.

CCTV

A resident said that a group has come together on Facebook to bulk purchase CCTV to improve security around residents' homes. He asked whether the Parish Council could approach DHMC to ask about the cost of expanding security, as security will share CCTV information with the Police. He also suggested that Streetwatch could be a possibility – where member of the public work with the Police. The Police recommend that volunteers patrol streets, with the permission of SMBC and with public liability insurance.

Church of England Presence

Borough Councillor Richard Holt said that in the original plans for Dickens Heath, there was supposed to be funding for a church and that he would support a Church of England presence in the village. He added that the Solihull Local Plan will bring the pressure of additional housing, and he would like to see a Neighbourhood Plan explored – which could perhaps include a church.

Village Green

A resident asked who owns the Village Green, and said that it is vulnerable and needs to be protected. The Chairman stated that the Parish Council is in discussion with the Receivers with regard to the purchase of the Village Green.

Adverse Camber Sign

A resident reiterated that an adverse camber sign is required at the new part of Tythe Barn Lane. This request was made a few months ago. The Parish Council agreed that the request should be made again.

Litter at Clock Island

There are constantly large numbers of cigarette butts at clock island, which are being thrown out of windows in the flats. Councillor Bob Cudmore has, in the past, approached the managing agent who then sent letters to all apartments – which has had no effect. Borough Councillor Richard Holt said that SMBC will prosecute if they know who has done it. The Parish Council to follow this up with SMBC. A resident suggested that persistent offending should be reported by ringing the Police on 101, as even seemingly trivial things should be reported.

Canal Towpath

At Hitherside, between bridges 13 and 14, the towpath has had some maintenance done for half the distance, but the rest is very muddy and dangerous. Can the Parish Council request that the rest is done?

Minute 190 (2015/16) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 191 (2015/16) Gardening/Landscaping Issues

Solihull MBC have delivered the new planters by the GP surgery and behind Tesco, they have also tidied up the scruffy triangular area under the planter at the back of Tesco. It all looks much better.

Minute 192 (2015/16) Report from the Borough Councillors

Councillor Linda Brown gave an update on the Solihull Local Plan meeting – the SLP must be completed by 2017, or the Government will decide housing numbers for them. Solihull currently have a 2,654 housing deficit, while Birmingham have a 38,424 deficit in housing numbers – so Solihull will definitely have to take some housing for Birmingham. Green Belt is at risk, it will be looked at and altered, and back garden developments will be looked at more sympathetically. She also gave an update on Licensing Committee – as of March, taxi drivers will be required to undergo training before getting their license, SMBC will be providing this free of charge.

Councillor Richard Holt also commented on the Solihull Local Plan – he said that it is critically important, but we have to be realistic. There will be a requirement for housing, and Blythe will be considered, therefore the process needs to be looked at constructively – considering whether any planning gains can be made eg. Youth facilities or a church. He also gave an update on libraries – opening hours should be extended, and hopefully this will happen in Dickens Heath too.

Minute 193 (2015/16) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday December 15th 2015

Proposed by Councillor Wright, seconded by Councillor Potter, it was **Resolved** that the minutes be approved as a true and accurate record subject to one agreed amendment proposed by Councillor Holloway.

Minute 194 (2015/16) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meetingSet up DHPC as an Employer within the Local Government Pension Scheme

Much of the documentation has now been sent, and the Chairman signed the letter to confirm that the PC has authorised this. The Clerk will need to move on to the PC payroll as of April, and the pay data forwarded to the LGPS.

Maintenance of the Village

The Village winter maintenance is due to take place in February.

Condition of Rumbush Lane

Neighbourhood Co-ordinator Matt Gardner is updating senior officers at SMBC on the condition of Rumbush Lane, but they will only be doing maintenance required to keep the road safe and nothing more – until the building works are completed.

Slippery Green Pavements

Matt Gardner will be having a walk around the village by the end of January with the grounds maintenance supervisors. The Chairman suggested that he take this up with Tammy Rowley, who is in charge of Street Cleaning at SMBC – this was agreed. It was also agreed that the PC needs to see a copy of the maintenance schedule – as we need to be sure that SMBC are discharging their duties. It was agreed that Tammy be asked what the contract is supposed to be and when the cleaning was last done.

Memorial

The location has been given the ok informally by Highways, the documentation is nearly complete, then Jean Walters will be able to prepare the planning application.

Minute 195 (2015/16) Planning Applications

Planning application 2015/53006 - Building 21, Rumbush Lane - this follows on from the previous Garden Squares planning applications. It was agreed that the Planning sub-committee's comments should be submitted.

No comments on the other planning applications, including a premises license application for Highgate United FC to have regulated entertainment, live and recorded music, and alcohol sales.

Minute 196 (2015/16) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Cudmore, seconded by Councillor Holloway, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the January 19th 2016 Agenda be approved – 19 cheques totalling £5,093.41. This included additional cheques for £300 for a grant to Leafield FC Under 9's and £25.92 for Ordnance Survey plans for the memorial.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £98,000 and is projecting a surplus of £77,000 at the year end.

Precept 2016/17 – Parish Council Element of the Council Tax

The Parish Council are required to advise SMBC of their precept demand by January 29th. The Clerk advised that the tax base has increased slightly from last year, with 9 additional properties.

Councillor Eames proposed a motion, that was seconded by Councillor Wright, that the Parish Council could prudently reduce the precept by 6%. This would allow the budget to be met, with a slight increase to reserves, and reserves are already at a level higher than recommended by national guidelines. Councillor Cudmore said that a 6% reduction would mean around £2.50 for the year to most households, which is not significant, and the loss of income would limit the Parish Council if something crops up. He agreed that reserves are very healthy, but they could be used – for example the PC may wish to spend additional funds on security, the Village Green, playground, youth facility costs, or pay off part of the mortgage.

The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council might wish to discuss initially whether to reduce the precept or not before discussing by how much. However, Councillor Eames wished to see his motion stand as additional houses will come on stream and be included in the tax base for 2017/18.

It was agreed that the Parish Council should vote on 2 proposals – the first to prudently reduce the Parish Council element of the Council Tax by 6%, and the second to delay the reduction for a year and keep it the same as 2015/16.

Resolved, by 4 votes to 3, that the Parish Council element of the Council Tax be reduced by 6% for 2016/17.

Minute 197 (2015/16) Reports from Councillors who attended any outside events

Councillor Doreen Wright attended the Combined Authority briefing – there will be an elected Mayor, and it will focus on economic regeneration, bringing in investment, independence, and integrating the transport networks.

Minute 198 (2015/16) Planning Sub-Committee

Response to the Solihull Local Plan Review

Jean Walters summarised a proposed response which included the points that the Blythe villages have had enough development, there is a risk of coalescence – but development must go somewhere. The Neighbourhood Plan that the Parish Council proposes to produce can develop alongside the SLP. Councillor Phil Brandum commended Jean on her report. The response was agreed, and all agreed that Jean should submit the report on the Parish Council's behalf. The Clerk to publish the report on the website and copy to it to the Borough Councillors and MP.

Status of Planning Sub-Committee

A report on the status of the Planning Sub-Committee, how it will operate, and report back to full council, was agreed.

Parking Issues

Members of the Parish Council will be meeting with senior SMBC Planning officers on January 25th 2016.

Neighbourhood Plan

Jean Walters will be attending a meeting with Tidbury Green PC, they are currently split on whether to collaborate with Dickens Heath PC on a Neighbourhood Plan for the area. Planning Sub-Committee members also plan to meet with Cheswick Green PC and SMBC to discuss progressing the Neighbourhood Plan.

Minute 199 (2015/16) PC Litter Picking Service

The Parish Council had agreed at a previous meeting to double their litter picking hours to 8 per week. Our current litter picker, Stephen, was initially keen but has had a bad foot and has only been able to do the 4 hours per week. It was agreed that up to 8 hours a week of flexible litter picking hours should be advertised, at the current hourly rate.

Minute 200 (2015/16) Sponsorship of Festival on the Green 2016

The Festival on the Green 2015 made a surplus. The Parish Council agreed that they would sponsor the Festival for 2016, but make a reduced grant of £250.

Minute 201 (2015/16) Welcome to the Village Signs

There are already 2 'Dickens Heath' signs – one on Dickens Heath Rd approaching the clock, and the other between Birchy Close and Birchy Leasowes Lane – these positions are fine. Councillors Phil Brandum and Bob Cudmore to look at the other 2 entrances to the village.

Minute 202 (2015/16) Maintenance of Islands

Councillors Phil Brandum, Bob Cudmore, Di Potter and Doreen Wright to have a walk around and discuss planting out.

Minute 203 (2015/16) Christmas Lighting

The Parish Council thanked the Chairman for arranging the solar lamp post trees at such short notice. The hanging trees were very effective, and better value than the lamp post mounted ones.

Minute 204 (2015/16) Status of the Village Green and Playground

It would be more suitable for the Village Green to be in the public domain – either adopted and maintained by SMBC, or owned by the Parish Council. It was agreed that the Parish Council should ask SMBC to adopt the Village Green, plus also pursue the option of whether the Parish Council can buy it. In the first instance, it was agreed to investigate who the land is registered to at the Land Registry.

Minute 205 (2015/16) Recent Anti Social Behaviour in the Village

A lot of car crime and anti-social behaviour has been recently reported in Dickens Heath, and residents are very concerned. Dickens Heath Management Co. has CCTV in the village centre, but the feeling is that it isn't much good. Some businesses have their own CCTV, and some house owners are also installing CCTV – which can all potentially be used for linking clues to crime. It is common for criminals to use the canals as access. The feeling is that residents would support the spending of funds on CCTV or security patrols. The Clerk to contact Sapphire, a security co. at Waterside, and ask whether they can give us any advice.

Minute 206 (2015/16) Parish Rooms

The Friday Breast Feeding Café is losing its NHS funding, but a NHS nurse has to attend. The Parish Council are happy to provide the Parish Rooms free of charge, but not additional funding. The Chairman to look into this further.

Minute 207 (2015/16) CorrespondenceExternal Auditing Process

Present contracts end in 2017, and NALC has set up an organisation SLB (Sector Led Body) to let contracts for the external audit of parish councils after 2017. The SLB states that the cost of external audit will be no more than in 2014/15. Local councils will be deemed to have opted in to the SLB contract unless they opt out by March 31st 2016. It was agreed that Dickens Heath PC should opt into the SLB contract.

End of Year Financial Procedures Course

It was agreed that the Clerk could attend this at a cost of £30.

Ward Action Plan 2016/17

SMBC have requested suggestions for next year's Ward Action Plan. The Parish Councillors suggested the inclusion of the Welcome to the Village signs, cleansing of the slippery green pavements, planting of the hedge in the Nature Reserve and maintenance of the island going out to Tidbury Green.

Complaint about Car Parked regularly on bend on Tythe Barn Lane

Residents complain that, although this car is parked legally, it is an accident waiting to happen. Councillor Ken Hawkins has been quite involved with this – the Clerk to follow it up with him.

Flooding

Caroline Spelman MP has recommended that the community takes photos to record flooding problems in the area, as Solihull MBC is currently reviewing its flood plans for the Dept of the Environment. It was agreed that an appeal for any photos be posted on the website and Facebook page.

Bulb Planting

It was agreed that the Parish Council would like to take up SMBC's offer of some bulbs for planting out.

Royal Garden Party

It was agreed that the Chairman should be nominated to attend the Royal Garden Party.

Meeting ended 10.05pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday February 16th 2016: 7.30pm The Parish Rooms

Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Tuesday 19th January 2016

Signature.....

Date.....