

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday June 16th 2015 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.

18 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 35 (2015/16) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 36 (2015/16) Chris Canaan of Akamba

Chris Canaan introduced himself, said that Akamba are celebrating 10 years in Dickens Heath and thanked the residents of Dickens Heath for their support. They are hoping to work with the Parish Council on a design for one of the traffic islands.

Minute 37 (2015/16) Dickens Heath Football Club

Mike McCarthy of Dickens Heath FC thanked the Parish Council who have been kind enough to help out financially in previous seasons. He said that Sunday league football is expensive with pitch costs, insurance etc. They play at Light Hall School, which has good facilities but it is expensive and Mike outlined some of the costs. He asked whether the Parish Council would be prepared to help with the pitch fees for the coming season. They have sponsorship for their kit from Smart Homes, and the Village Hotel are helping with sponsorship too. Their players are local, with 60% from Dickens Heath, and players are of various ages from 18 up. They cannot currently take on any players under the age of 16 due to insurance restrictions, but in the future, they would like to extend the club to take on the 'older youth'.

Minute 38 (2015/16) Festival on the Green 2015

Andrew Simpkins spoke on behalf of the Festival on the Green committee. This event was suggested by residents, to help people feel more a part of the community, and a committee came together. A date has been set of Saturday September 12th 2 till 6pm. Dickens Heath Management Co. have given permission for the use of the Village Green, and they have obtained insurance for the event. They have planned live entertainment – with 4 bands, a pipe band, the school and Pop Choirs, dance groups and around 25 to 30 stall holders. They would like the event to be free to attend. The Village Church has paid for the insurance, and they have sponsorship from a couple of businesses. The stage truck is being sponsored by Smart Homes. Other costs will include marketing, first aid, and some of the performers' costs. They plan to make this an annual event if it goes well. They are hoping that the Parish Council will be prepared to give some financial support to the event, and suggested that their shortfall is likely to be around £500.

Andrew also briefly spoke about the new Dickens Heath Scout Group, he is also involved in the organisation of this. There are already over 60 children involved, with 2 beavers groups and one cubs group, and they are hoping to set up a Scouts group in the New Year. They would also like to ask the Parish Council for some financial support. It was agreed that this would be placed on the July agenda and Andrew would attend the meeting.

Minute 39 (2015/16) Public Participation

Highway Issues/Parking

Adverse Camber

At the start of the new bit of Tythe Barn Lane, an adverse camber sign is really needed to warn motorists, this to be taken up with SMBC.

Village Maintenance/Litter

Brockhurst Lane Planting

This is due to happen early in July.

Maintenance of Traffic Islands/Footpaths

The traffic island on Old Dickens Heath Rd, as you go out to Tidbury Green, really needs some maintenance work. It is overgrown with moss and weeds, and the hedges need cutting back along the footpaths.

Bins

There are not enough dog bins, and although dog waste can be put in the ordinary bins, they always seem to be overflowing. SMBC don't provide dog bins any more, and additional bins are expensive – in the region of £750 each. Some residents are also putting household rubbish in these bins.

Garden Squares II

Elegant Homes are finalising the deal for Garden Squares II and the 2 additional sites. There is existing planning consent, but they will be putting in a new planning application to modify the existing one – it is expected to include 160 to 170 dwellings in total.

Future Developments

Construction Traffic

Lots of large construction lorries are driving to the Meadowpleck island and through the village. The access route should be Rumbush Lane from the West, but it is still not yet signed off. Solihull MBC are working with the site manager at David Wilson Homes to ensure that their suppliers comply. But some signs are really needed. Work has now started on the Bellway site, and they should be using the same access route. The Parish Council will be following this up at their meeting with Paul Tovey of SMBC.

The developers have already put up their yellow advertising signs, and lorry drivers may be following these. Residents cannot understand why they have been allowed to put these up when the houses are not even for sale yet. The yellow signs for Aspenwood should also have been taken down, as this site is now complete. The Parish Council will also follow this up with Paul Tovey.

Minute 40 (2015/16) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

Councillors Phil Brandum and Doreen Wright declared an interest during the discussion of the planning application for 266 Dickens Heath Rd because it affects Birchy Close in which they are resident.

Minute 41 (2015/16) Gardening/Landscaping Issues

The Parish Council thanked Councillors Bob Cudmore and Di Potter for planting up the 4 planters. Two further planters are expected at the clock island and these will also be planted up. The Clerk to check that the planters are again included in the Plantscape watering contract. Work is also progressing with regard to planting out some of the traffic islands.

Minute 42 (2015/16) Minutes of previous meeting held on Thursday May 21st 2015

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

Minute 43 (2015/16) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting

Additional meeting in August

It was agreed that the additional meeting in August would be held on Thursday August 27th 2015 at 7pm.

SMBC Highway Improvements

These were all sub-standard and are now being redone, it has been a major waste of public money. If there had been consultation, this could have been avoided. This will be discussed in the meeting with Paul Tovey, and all also voted in favour of writing to the SMBC Chief Executive. There is also concern that Main St will not cope with the increase in traffic as the village grows, it was agreed that this should also be brought to the attention of SMBC.

Nature Reserve

Although this initially looked dreadful following the dredging, it is looking better as it becomes grown over. The fallen trees have been left to encourage wildlife, and Dickens Heath Management Co. have no funds to improve things further.

Litter in the Canal at Waterside

The narrow part of the canal to the left of Waterside collects litter, the Clerk to request this part is cleaned by the Canal & River Trust.

Minute 44 (2015/16) Planning Applications

Planning application 2015/50579 at 266 Dickens Heath Rd will have a significant impact on the street scene, particularly in the case of the second building which will be in Birchy Close, and is an overdevelopment of the site. All, except for Councillors Phil Brandum and Doreen Wright who are resident in Birchy Close, agreed that an objection should be sent in – Councillor Trevor Eames to draft. It was also agreed that, should the application be approved, the Parish Council would like to see part of the hedge removed to improve the sightline.

No comments on the other planning applications.

Minute 45 (2015/16) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Cudmore, seconded by Councillor Potter, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the June 16th 2015 Agenda be approved – 13 cheques and 1 direct debit totalling £2,114.59. This included additional cheques for £702.14 to GBR Phoenix Beard for the service charge, and £280 to the Additional Curates Society for the printing of business cards.

The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £104,000 and is projecting a surplus of £79,000 at the year end.

The Annual Return for 2014/15 has been sent to the external auditor.

Minute 46 (2015/16) Reports from Councillors who attended any outside events

The new Parish Councillors attended the WALC induction day, and found it to be wide ranging and useful.

Minute 47 (2015/16) Tidbury Green Lowbrook Farm Enquiry

Councillors Maureen Holloway and Doreen Wright attended, and resident Jean Walters made a presentation on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), at the June 9th appeal. The Inspector has stopped the inquiry and there is no date yet for reconvening. The appeal included statements on SMBC's 5 year land supply, and the appellant's QC and the CPRE discussed the status of the land. The appellant is trying to say that the land status is 'in a vacuum'. The CPRE are saying that it can't be, and that it should revert back to its status in the previous Solihull Plan until the current Plan is resolved. The review of the current Solihull Local Plan won't happen before the Autumn as SMBC's planning department don't have the resources. Caroline Spelman MP has written asking that the land is safeguarded until the Solihull Local Plan is approved.

Minute 48 (2015/16) Richborough Estates Proposal

Richborough Estates are putting together a proposal for developing land currently used as sports facilities on the edge of Dickens Heath. No one can stop them from putting a package together, and participating in a petition against it would not help the Parish Council's position. The sites in question were possible sites that SMBC looked at in their original plan. SMBC dismissed them as sites for development in 2012, and they shouldn't really go back on this. In the draft revised Local Plan, the Borough Council stated that the sites were deemed unsuitable for various reasons – including ancient woodland, wildlife, hedgerows, infrastructure concerns, 1 in 100 year flood risk, the development would narrow the gap between Dickens Heath and Wythall and it is too large a development for local needs. It is Jean Walters' (of CPRE) opinion that in the Autumn, SMBC will publish alternative sites for development, and that at the moment there is nothing to fight as yet. The Parish Council were in support of this view.

Councillor Trevor Eames stated that SMBC will end up having to take some of the Birmingham City Council shortfall in housing land, and so land will have to be found and inevitably it will be Green Belt. Sites such as these are likely to be brought forward. All agreed that this should be kept on the agenda for future meetings.

Minute 49 (2015/16) Youth/Community Project

Councillor Phil Brandum stated that a youth facility for the 11 to 15 year olds of the village has been a priority for the Parish Council for many years. To date, no appropriate land or space has been found. Solihull MBC is in support of a youth facility on the school site, and is unlikely to support any other. It would be very helpful if Chris Barr of SMBC could come and talk to the new Parish Council, he would then like there to be a public open day with experts present. Councillor Maureen Holloway emphasised the importance of consulting with residents who live near the school. All agreed that a meeting with Chris Barr should be set up before the July PC meeting.

Minute 50 (2015/16) Village Survey

There is a lot of raw data, Councillor Phil Brandum to analyse the data for a future meeting. Quite a few of those who responded have left contact details, the Clerk to acknowledge and thank these residents. The Parish Council would like to contact these residents in the future with a view to possibly setting up a focus group or similar – to be considered at a future meeting. It was agreed that the Clerk should arrange for a winning contact to be chosen at random, and then publicized.

Minute 51 (2015/16) Review of Internal Audit Report, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

As the Internal Audit Report had made some recommendations with regard to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, it was decided that all 3 documents should be reviewed together. The recommendations were taken on board and the 3 documents were approved.

Minute 52 (2015/16) Parish Rooms

No issues.

Minute 53 (2015/16) Ensuring that Councillors are kept updated between Meetings

Councillor Doreen Wright is not on email, and therefore the Clerk and Parish Councillors need to ensure that she is kept updated by text/phone for anything urgent and by post once a week for non-urgent issues.

Minute 54 (2015/16) Improving Accessibility of Councillors

Councillors' business cards are now available and their photos are on the website. New Parish Council email addresses are in the process of being set up.

Minute 55 (2015/16) Progress of SMBC Works

This will be taken up in the Parish Council's forthcoming meeting with Paul Tovey.

Minute 56 (2015/16) Requests for Donations

The Parish Council would like to formalise the system for approving grants and donations. There is a form that has been used historically, Councillor Phil Brandum will review this. In the meantime, the form to be forwarded to DH Football Club and Andrew Simpkins (Festival on the Green) to complete, and attach additional financial information. This will allow the Parish Council to assess the justification and benefit of a grant or donation, it needs to benefit the local community. The Parish Council is generally supportive of the requests for the Festival on the Green and DH Football Club. However, the Parish Council in the main were not in support of a donation to Akamba's children's charity because it will benefit a school in Kenya and not the local community.

Minute 57 (2015/16) Litter Collection/Village Maintenance

There was a discussion about whether the Parish Council should be taking on additional services. Some parish councils have services delegated to them by their principal authority, and they can then provide an enhanced service. However, there is the issue of double taxation – residents paying twice for the same service. Stephen, the Parish Council litter picker, provides a supplementary service.

The green mould has still not been treated and is a real health and safety issue when wet. It was agreed that Stephen could do this supplementary work, and the Parish Council could invoice SMBC. The Clerk to contact Chris Barr to find out what it would involve and potential costs, and the PC to review at the next meeting.

Minute 58 (2015/16) War Memorial

All are now happy with the revised spacing of the wording.

Minute 59 (2015/16) Parking at Whitlocks End Train Station

Councillor Trevor Eames to draft a letter to Centro.

Minute 60 (2015/16) Solar Christmas Trees

In the village survey, the solar Christmas Trees were rated as the least important. It was agreed that the Parish Council should research some less costly Christmas decorations.

Minute 61 (2015/16) Planting of Roundabouts

Akamba are looking at sponsoring the Meadowpleck/Calcutt Way roundabout. SMBC will need to approve any statue that is sited there, measurements will need to be forwarded.

Minute 62 (2015/16) Village Green and Village Playground

Dickens Heath Management Co. have contacted the Receivers, and they will accept a 'reasonable offer'. Solihull MBC have suggested an offer of £1, all agreed this.

Minute 63 (2015/16) Clerk and Admin Assistant Hours

The new and larger Parish Council intend to be more proactive and hold more meetings with SMBC staff etc. This will all mean additional administration work, and the Clerk and Admin Assistant have already been working additional hours. It was agreed that the hours of both should be increased by 2 hours per week.

Minute 64 (2015/16) Correspondence

'Solihull Soup'

This is a new community project that SMBC are looking to introduce, the Chairman is able to attend the information evening.

Litter outside Mortons

There has been a complaint about the amount of cigarette ends outside Mortons. Mortons are now a tenant of Elegant Homes who are converting Parkridge House into apartments. The litter may be dropped by contractors rather than Mortons customers. If the litter is outside Mortons, then any complaint needs to be addressed to Mortons. However, if the litter is in the road, then this is still the responsibility of DHMC, the Clerk to find out how often they clean Main St.

Solihull MBC Drop In Session

The Parish Councillors have been invited to a networking drop in session where they will be able to meet the new Borough Councillors and representatives of other partnership organisations.

Minute 65 (2015/16) Items for next agenda

Dickens Heath Scout Group.

Meeting ended 9.55pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday July 21st 2015: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms