

## The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday March 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

#### **Present:**

**Dickens Heath Parish Councillors;** Trevor Eames, Maureen Holloway (Chair), David Jones, Nargis Rashid, Alan Scholes, Doreen Wright.

Maxine Burrows of Solihull MBC

4 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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#### **Minute 209 (2017/18) Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were accepted from Councillor Di Potter.

#### **Minute 210 (2017/18) Public Participation**

##### Dickens Heath Management Co. Service Charge

Two residents, with a property in Willow Gardens, said that the lift lobby in the underground car park is in a terrible state. The plaster has all been stripped back to try to deal with leaking water in the wall – this work was started mid 2016, but is still going on. Residents have to put up with this, but the service charge still goes up. Councillor Maureen Holloway suggested that the residents should contact the LAS – the Leasehold Advisory Service. Councillor David Jones suggested that the residents form a group to take action. The residents said that they had tried to rally other residents unsuccessfully on a previous occasion.

Councillor Trevor Eames said that Dickens Heath Management Co. (DHMC) currently report to the Receivers, who are in the process of selling off the freehold. The Leasehold Act gives residents legal powers to look after their own interests and to potentially change the management co. But in this case, it's not possible to change the management co. until the village centre is complete. So residents' rights are currently restricted, there is no annual meeting etc. Dickens Heath Management Co. have no reserve fund for repairs because of the way they are funded. Now there are a lot of faults that need addressing/repair but no money. DHMC have said that only essential works will be done.

Councillor Trevor Eames said that, through DHRAG, he has the contact details of many residents affected by the DHMC service charge. The resident suggested that all of these residents need to take up this issue with Nick Page, CEO of SMBC – SMBC should never have allowed the underground car parks to have been built without damp proofing. The residents will forward some photos to Councillor Eames.

#### **Minute 211 (2017/18) Drop In Facility – Fiveway Café**

Maxine Burrows of Engage at Solihull MBC gave an overview of how they are providing early help and prevention for young people aged up to 19, particularly teenagers, with mental health issues. A consultation showed that young people feel that no one cares unless they try to kill themselves. 3 drop in centres have been set up – at Chelmunds Cross, Hatchford Brook, and now at Dickens Heath Village Hall. Schools encourage vulnerable pupils to drop in to these centres, where they can bring a parent or a friend. They run well being activities, sports activities, and focus on taking care of yourself. It is a place where children feel safe to talk. In the North, 18 young people now attend. The centres have a lot of staff, which allows all the young people to be able to talk in confidence. A fourth centre will be opening in Balsall Common after Easter.

Maxine spoke a little about herself – her team is about supporting communities, and is part of Solihull MBC. The Public Health budget is currently covering the rent for the cafes. They are hoping that local businesses will support them – for example with refreshments. They are doing assemblies at local schools – which includes Year 6 at Dickens Heath School. They

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have also been in touch with Dickens Heath Youth Group. It was agreed that the Clerk would publicize the drop in facility, and the Chair thanked Maxine for coming along to the meeting.

**Minute 212 (2017/18) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

None.

**Minute 213 (2017/18) Report from the Borough Councillors**

None.

**Minute 214 (2017/18) Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday February 13<sup>th</sup> 2018**

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

**Minute 215 (2017/18) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting**

Licence Application for 19 Griffin Lane

Councillor Trevor Eames has spoken to the Licencing Officer at SMBC – as there is no business taking place at this address yet, the Parish Council should just note it for the moment.

Floral Decorations from Plantscape

A quote has been provided by Plantscape for the usual 10 flower boxes for clock island plus 110 hanging baskets to go on 55 lamp posts. There is no increase in prices from 2017, and Plantscape can deliver them on June 11<sup>th</sup>. This was agreed.

Playground – Letter from SMBC Solicitor to the Receivers

SMBC's Solicitor sent a letter to the Receivers on March 6<sup>th</sup> – requesting a discussion about the playground and the Parish Council's offer to buy or lease it. It was agreed that this should be chased up in a month's time if no reply has been received.

Model of Village Borrowed by Elegant Homes

This has been successfully returned to the Library.

Litter Truck for Litter Picker

This has been delivered.

Internal Audit

This has been arranged for April 25<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Mechanical Brushing of Pavements

Solihull MBC have said that the mechanical cleansing of the pavements would be facilitated if one or two of the bollards around each island could be removed, and they asked the Parish Council if they would agree to this. The Parish Council confirmed that they were in agreement as long as Highways were satisfied with this on safety grounds.

Recycling of Christmas Trees

Solihull MBC did not offer this service for 2017 and unfortunately quite a lot of trees were dumped.

Pot Holes

These are being logged by SMBC and will be repaired in the new financial year.

Litter Picking on Dickens Heath Road

Dickens Heath Road by the Bellway site is not being litter picked by SMBC, and a resident also said that the gritters did not go that far either and turned round at the island – it may be because this section of road is still defined as 'rural'. If so, this needs to be updated.

Island at Copperfield Court

Councillor Doreen Wright has been tidying this up.

**Minute 216 (2017/18) Planning Applications**

No comments.

**Minute 217 (2017/18) Update on Solihull Local Plan (SLP) Review**

Cheswick Green Parish Council have commissioned consultants to carry out a residents' survey on the needs of their village. The Parish Council agreed it would be useful to get in touch with CGPC and look at their website with regard to this.

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**Minute 218 (2017/18) Islands**

The island at Gorcott Lane has been tidied up by a company who are apparently working for Dickens Heath Management Co. – it is greatly improved.

**Minute 219 (2017/18) Welcome Gates**

Councillors Alan Scholes and Maureen Holloway have met up with Matt Gardner of SMBC and a representative of Glasdon UK Ltd to look at 3 further sites at which Welcome Gates could potentially be sited on the other access roads into Dickens Heath. These sites are on Dickens Heath Road, Rumbush Lane and Tythe Barn Lane. Some of the gates would have to be narrower than those installed by Miller and Carter due to insufficient space at the roadside. Glasdon are currently putting together some designs and quotes.

**Minute 220 (2017/18) Dickens Heath in Bloom**

It was agreed that a competition for the best kept front garden in the village should be launched and publicised – asking residents if they wish to enter.

**Minute 221 (2017/18) Memorial**

Councillor Alan Scholes gave an update on progress with the memorial. The stonemason needs an idea of what shape of memorial the Parish Council would like, and Councillor Scholes has put together some suggestions of shapes. A majority of Councillors preferred the 'squared off shaped stone'. It was agreed that Councillors Alan Scholes and David Jones should progress this.

**Minute 222 (2017/18) Dickens Heath Sports Club Calendar**

Dickens Heath Sports Club has offered the Parish Council the use of its facilities and grounds for 5 days per year. A draft flyer has been produced – appealing for residents who might be interested in getting involved with a 'Friends of Dickens Heath' committee to organise events for the community at Dickens Heath Sports Club. It was agreed that the flyer should be publicized.

**Minute 223 (2017/18) Community Chest**

A draft information sheet and application form for the Community Chest fund has been produced. It was agreed that this should be publicized with the form available to download from the PC website.

**Minute 224 (2017/18) Councillors who have attended Outside Groups or Events**Meeting with Dickens Heath School Council about the Playground

Councillor Nargis Rashid attended a meeting of the Dickens Heath School Council – she said that the children were very well mannered and articulate. They have lots of wonderful ideas about a new playground, and have provided the Parish Council with some of their designs. All of the children present had used the village playground and most still do regularly. The children would also be very keen to write to the Receivers, who currently own the playground. The Parish Council agreed that this was a good idea, and may get the attention of the Receivers who have not responded to recent communication from the Parish Council.

Building Work at 266 Dickens Heath Road

Councillor Doreen Wright has met with a planning officer at SMBC regarding a new property being built at 266 Dickens Heath Road (at the entrance to Birchy Close). This property had planning approval for 1 velux window at the rear, but the builders are currently putting in 2 dormer windows that overlook the neighbour. The owner has been told to stop, to build in compliance with the planning approval, and to put in a retrospective planning application for the 2 dormer windows. Councillor Trevor Eames added that SMBC could then refuse this planning application, or could allow the dormer windows but with frosted glass. SMBC do not really like enforcement because it is costly, whereas it won't cost the owner to appeal. The benefits of planning tend to fall to the applicant.

**Minute 225 (2017/18) Financial Matters**

Proposed by Councillor Wright, seconded by Councillor Eames, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the March 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 Agenda be approved – 22 payments totalling £5,957.10 including additional payments of £109.20 to Opus for gas, £504.00 for the litter truck from Tudor Environmental, £725.56 to Savills for the service charge and £166.01 to Savills for the ground rent. It was also agreed that any further invoices that relate to 2017/18 should be paid by March 31<sup>st</sup> if possible – eg for the recent fire extinguisher service.

Payroll Contract

It was agreed that the payroll contract with Diane Malley should be renewed for 2018/19.

Pension Arrangements

Simon, our litter picker, is now working 16 hours per week. This puts him into a different pension category, and Simon is now entitled to opt in to a pension scheme into which the Parish Council would contribute as his employer. It was agreed that the Clerk should write to Simon and ask if he wishes to opt in.

The Parish Council is currently showing a surplus to date of £103,000 with the end of year surplus projected to be £101,000.

**Minute 226 (2017/18) Annual Parish Meeting (APM)**

A representative of Dickens Heath School has been invited - to speak about new developments at the school, and the Community Chest fund will be allocated based on the votes of residents in attendance. It was agreed that the Clerk should organise the usual buffet and drinks.

**Minute 227 (2017/18) Parish Rooms**

A local businessman has asked if they could use the meeting room – this was agreed in return for a donation to 'In Bloom'.

**Minute 228 (2017/18) Parish Council News**

The next Parish Council News is due to be published in the May Dickens Heath Directory. There is so much that we need to publicize at the moment, that the Clerk suggested that this be brought forward to the April Directory. This was agreed.

**Minute 229 (2017/18) Correspondence**Youth Group Bowling Trip

The Youth Group have asked whether the Parish Council would again be prepared to contribute towards their bowling trip. The Parish Council agreed that they would contribute half of the cost.

Police Changes in Blythe

WPC Sharon Grant and PCSO Wendy Shale will be attending our Retired Coffee Morning on Tuesday March 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 to give an update on the changes to Policing as of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. Dickens Heath will no longer be covered by the Rural Police Team, but by the team based in Solihull.

Festival on the Green 2018

This year's Festival on the Green will take place on Saturday June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Andrew Simpkins has asked whether the Parish Council would again be able to provide some financial support. It was agreed that the Parish Council would pay for the insurance for the event.

**Minute 230 (2017/18) Proposal to Move the Parish Offices from 1 Wharf House to the Library in Dickens Heath**

Members of the Parish Council met with Kate Bunting and Emma Mayhew of Solihull MBC to discuss this. They said that SMBC would be prepared to offer the Parish Council a licence for a fixed term of 10 years, and that after a closer examination of the library's costs, a contribution of around £15,000 p.a. from the Parish Council would be acceptable. It was agreed that the PC would require a contract that specifies a price rather than a percentage of the costs, and would need a solicitor to negotiate the contract properly.

The Chair asked if all members of the Parish Council would be in favour of a move to the Library on the basis of a 10 year term at a cost of approximately £15,000. If both of those are agreed in principle, and the terms are right, all are in favour of progressing a move to the Library.

It was agreed that the Parish Rooms should be leased rather than sold, if possible. The Clerk to check that the Parish Council is legally allowed to be a landlord.

**Minute 231 (2017/18) Items for Next Agenda**

None.

**Meeting ended 9.45pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup> 2018: 7.00pm The Parish Rooms**