

Parish Council News – June 2018

Parish Council Meetings – New Start Time of 7.15pm!

The Parish Council's meetings are on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, at a new start time of 7.15pm. Our next meetings will be on June 12th and July 10th. Please come and join us, with an opportunity to ask questions at the start of the meeting.

Dickens Heath in Bloom – Best Front Garden/Hanging Basket/Window Box Competition

As part of Dickens Heath in Bloom – the Parish Council will be running a garden competition, with a 1st and 2nd prize for the best front garden, hanging basket or window box. We would love to hear from anyone who wishes to enter!

Chair's Review of the Year 2017/18

The PC has been so busy over the last 12 months that I was overwhelmed when it came to reviewing all that had been achieved and begun during the year. We co-opted a new Councillor Nargis Rashid and she has complemented the expertise we already had working for the community.

I am sure that you will all agree that the village has looked particularly good this year, with the additional litter picking which we have organized, as well as the 2,000 plus bulbs planted around the village by three of the serving Parish Councillors, with the appreciated help of Bob Cudmore who is a former Parish Councillor. The welcome gates on Dickens Heath Road have been very well received and have enhanced the approach to the village. We are planning further gateways over the coming months and hope that the completed project will increase everyone's pride in Dickens Heath.

The hanging baskets have been ordered for this coming year and the large planters will be planted out with summer bedding plants shortly. The planters were spruced up with a lick of paint last summer. The lovely display of hanging baskets and planters which we had during the year all contributed to make our village its most vibrant. It is hoped that we receive some recognition of this when we are judged for our entry as DH in Bloom this year. It is hoped that more residents will become involved with planting and watering, and also partake in our best front garden competition. During the days leading up to the festive season the solar Xmas trees brightened up the dark evenings.

We had a really well attended Remembrance Service in the village, with a bugler playing the Last Post and the cubs and scouts playing a very large part in the proceedings. As ever we are very grateful to Andrew Simpkins and Rev. Theresa Jones for planning and taking the Service. We had hoped to have our long awaited memorial stone in place, but unfortunately that just didn't happen. However we are now in advanced negotiations with the supplier and SMBC for the installation of the memorial stone. The PC is also appreciative of Andrew's willingness to step in at short notice and conduct the Carol Service outside Tesco. The mince pies provided by Tesco were much appreciated. We hope that we can increase the numbers of residents attending in 2018.

We have provided various grants for organisations associated with the village. We have financially supported the Festival on the Green, DH Football Club, DH Sports Club and the Scouts. It is hoped that our community chest, which is a new concept, will be successful this coming year.

There have been concerns about the library in the village not being well used. We have begun discussions with SMBC to move the PC Offices to the upstairs area of the library. This would enable the PC to contribute toward the running costs of the building and also make the PC more central to the heart of the village. Those discussions are still ongoing. It would also free up time for Helen our clerk who spends a fair amount of time dealing with the running of the Office. We have suggested that maybe a post office could be accommodated at the library too, but that is all it is at the moment, a suggestion.

We have not been able to progress the Neighbourhood Plan for Dickens Heath, as we are awaiting Solihull MBC's draft review of the local plan, which is expected to be issued for consultation during late summer/autumn 2018. We have however been busy looking at planning applications which can at times become very involved. There have been particular concerns over the removal of safety fencing around the SUDs drainage system on the David Wilson site known as the Paddocks. It is understood that the developer and SMBC are in the process of agreeing a compromise on this although we are not sure. The PC has been very proactive in keeping the two sides in discussion on this important drainage system.

The Village Green and children's playground are still in the ownership of the Receivers acting for Parkridge Developments. Following an accident at the playground it was closed for quite a few weeks. We were very concerned that the equipment needed updating and repairing to make it safe and so, following a public meeting of the PC, we decided that the PC would like to pay for the installation of new equipment and to acquire the Village Green and playground. Despite various attempts to open up discussions with the Receivers, we didn't receive any response. We took this up with SMBC through Ward Councillors, and SMBC wrote in attempt to get negotiations started; they too have drawn a blank so far. We haven't given up on this but it is a very tough nut to crack!

The youth facility at the school hasn't had its plans submitted yet. We know how desperate everyone is to see this facility up and running, and how long it has been in the planning. I hope that it will be what is required for the community as a whole.

Parking problems have continued to be an issue, despite the PC's best efforts to try and get traders out of the public car parks to relieve the shortage of parking for residents. We are continuing to monitor the situation in the centre of the village. Complaints have been raised with the Police about inconsiderate parking which has caused problems for the S3 bus service but there has been little or no improvement. It is hoped that we may be able to get the dialogue moving on this topic when we meet up with our new Police team. We are now attached to the Shirley team from 1st April and are looking to form a good working relationship. The previous team were based in Chelmsley Wood which meant they were not always close at hand for an immediate response.

The last 12 months have flown by, we have been very busy. Helen and Hannah have coped extremely well with our plethora of new projects as well as their administration work of the PC and the PC Office. I have been really impressed by the work undertaken by all of the Councillors, Helen, Hannah and Simon our litter picker. They are a great team. Let's hope 2018 sees all of our projects come to fruition.

Maureen Holloway

Chair, Dickens Heath Parish Council.

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