

# The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

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

### **Present:**

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

5 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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### **Minute 91 (2018/19) Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **Minute 92 (2018/19) Public Participation**

#### Welcome Gates

A resident asked why the welcome gates by Miller and Carter only had a sign on one side. Councillor Alan Scholes replied that visuals were produced with various combinations of gates and signs, and the Parish Council felt that it didn't look right with signs on both sides given that it is a wide road.

#### Waterside – Requests for Funding

It was agreed that these would be discussed later in the meeting as they are on the agenda.

### **Minute 93 (2018/19) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

Councillor Doreen Wright declared an interest in the discussion of the planning application for 36 Birchy Close - as she is a resident of Birchy Close.

### **Minute 94 (2018/19) Report from Borough Councillors**

Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins sent his apologies and an update which included comments on the wonderful turn out for the Remembrance Service in Dickens Heath and that the full report on the flooding is expected in the New Year.

He is also seeking a 20mph zone outside Cheswick Green Primary School, and wondered whether such a limit might be appropriate near Dickens Heath School. Councillor Trevor Eames commented that, given the road layout, parking and traffic calming near Dickens Heath School, cars do not generally travel at more than 20mph and so a specific 20mph zone is not necessary. The Parish Council agreed that this was the case, and also that no one has requested a 20mph zone by the school.

### **Minute 95 (2018/19) Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday October 9<sup>th</sup> 2018**

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

### **Minute 96 (2018/19) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting**

#### Solar Christmas Trees

These will be arriving on November 28<sup>th</sup>, with a switch on date of December 1<sup>st</sup>. It was noted that Plantscape have left one hanging basket still up, at the Hensborough/Dickens Heath Rd junction, the Clerk to ask Plantscape to take this down when they deliver the solar trees.

#### Offer of a Hand Gritter from SMBC

This offer has been accepted, but warnings against doing so were discussed at the SAC meeting – so this may not be taken any further.

#### Halloween 2018

Halloween was a lot quieter in Dickens Heath this year.

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Signature.....

Date.....

**Minute 97 (2018/19) Planning Applications**

An additional planning application was also considered:

- 2018/03088 - 96 Lady Lane, for a ground floor and first floor side extension

No comments on any of the planning application.

**Minute 98 (2018/19) Update on Proposed Changes to Bus Services**

Councillor Trevor Eames gave an update on the latest position regarding the tender for subsidised bus services, which includes those for Dickens Heath. Worcestershire County Council had withdrawn their subsidy for the S3W which crosses the border, but they have now changed their mind and will continue to subsidise the S3W. This has resulted in the service therefore being mainly continued in the new contract. The existing long service once an hour will continue from Wythall, to Tidbury Green and Dickens Heath and on to Solihull – following much the same route as it does now, possibly with a few minor tweaks. The short route from Dickens Heath into Solihull will also continue. The S3 and S3W will both terminate in Solihull. The contracts will be going out to tender very soon.

Councillor Maureen Holloway added that the Parish Council had copied in Andy Street and Caroline Spelman MP when objecting to proposals to remove the direct bus service from Dickens Heath to Solihull, and thanked them for getting involved.

**Minute 99 (2018/19) Update on the Parish Council's Proposed Move to the Library and Sale of 1 Wharf House**

The sale of 1 Wharf House is now with the solicitors, with the prospective purchaser having had the premises valued during the previous week.

Solihull MBC have provided the Parish Council with a Heads of Terms document for the occupation of the first floor of the library, and this was discussed. There is a statement that the presence of the Parish Council staff will enable the library to be made available to the public on a self-service basis during extended usage hours. It was agreed that this needs to be subject to further discussion - if the Parish Council staff are lone working, then they are not in a position to also be responsible for the library being open on a self-service basis. The Parish Council agreed the Heads of Terms subject to this one amendment.

There was further discussion about the hours that the library would be open for Parish Council activities – it can be open at any time, and Councillor Maureen Holloway has spoken to Dickens Heath Management Co. about key holding in the same that they hold a key for users of the Village Hall.

There will be a further meeting with library officers in early December.

**Minute 100 (2018/19) Update on the Meeting with Solihull MBC and the Liquidators about the Village Green, Playground and Country Park (Small Nature Reserve)**

Councillor Alan Scholes and the Clerk met with representatives of SMBC, Savills and Liquidators PwC about the Village Green, Playground and Small Nature Reserve, and an update of this meeting was shared. SMBC are willing to acquire the freehold of both pieces of land but would wish to lease them to the Parish Council to maintain. The representative of the Liquidators indicated that they see SMBC or the PC as the natural custodian of this land, and would expect it to be handed over for a 'token gesture'.

The following steps were agreed at this meeting:

- Savills to get the playground repaired and open.
- SMBC to inspect both pieces of land so that defects/dilapidations can be recognised/remedied.
- The PC to draft a business case/proposal that SMBC officers can use as a starting point for a report to take to the Cabinet member for approval.
- SMBC to put together Heads of Terms for acquisition of the land and its lease to the PC.

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Signature.....

Date.....

Councillor Scholes asked that SMBC, when the owner of the land, would register the Village Green formally as a Village Green. However, the reply was that SMBC do not as a matter of course register their parcels of land.

The Parish Council discussed this update, and agreed that they need to insist on the Village Green being formally registered – the restrictive covenants will fall away once acquired by SMBC. It was also noted that the playground is now open, but the gates to it have been removed.

There followed some discussion about whether the Parish Council should aim to own the Village Green (but not the Small Nature Reserve). The Liquidators wish to offload both pieces of land as a package, SMBC are willing to acquire them both as long as any maintenance costs are met by the Parish Council. But are the Parish Council happy with this arrangement? It was agreed that the Clerk should request a meeting so that members of the Parish Council can discuss this further with Solihull MBC officers so that a joint approach can be agreed before the next meeting with the Liquidators and Savills.

### **Minute 101 (2018/19) SMBC Issues**

#### Braggs Farm Lane – Proposal to make this a No Through Road

Chair Maureen Holloway said that many residents don't see this proposal as favourable. In fact today there was an accident on the M42 and the village was grid locked. It doesn't make sense to shut this road. Councillor David Jones commented that with more houses being built in the area, roads shouldn't be shut. Councillor Trevor Eames has carried out some analysis and believes that around 400/500 vehicles use Braggs Farm Lane each day, and its closure would add over 1 mile to each journey. It was agreed that the Parish Council should object to the closure of Braggs Farm Lane and request that it is brought up to standard. The use of the road currently is not excessive, but that is because the road is so poor. To put these cars on to other already congested roads doesn't make sense. The Parish Council's view is that this proposal should be shelved until the road networks have been looked at through the Solihull Local Plan and improved. For the moment, the PC believes that Braggs Farm Lane needs to be kept open.

#### Flooding Update Event

Ed Bradford of SMBC is planning a flooding update event in the Parish Rooms on November 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Those affected by the flooding will be invited, and the Parish Council will publicize it. Councillor Trevor Eames added that at this stage the update is unlikely to address any remedial measures.

#### Solihull Local Plan (SLP) Review and Traffic Impact Meeting

A meeting had been attended by Councillors Trevor Eames and David Jones on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018, and an update report has been circulated to Councillors. The fact that double yellow lines are required on the bus route alongside the Village Green was raised, and they agreed to look into it – the Clerk to put in a formal request to Ashley Prior at SMBC. There will be another meeting in the New Year, which Ed Bradford will attend to give an update on the flooding.

#### Solihull Local Plan (SLP) Review – New Timetable

Solihull MBC will publish another consultation in December 2018 – to further review the sites already in the SLP, along with potential additional sites. However, the Government still doesn't have the final formula to calculate the number of houses required. So SMBC cannot complete the Plan until they know exactly how to calculate the number of houses - otherwise the Plan could be rejected. This has pushed back the adoption of the SLP Review to mid 2020.

### **Minute 102 (2018/19) Village Issues**

#### Welcome to the Village Signs

The rest of the welcome to the village signs are due to be installed in the next couple of weeks, which is good news.

Youth Group

The Police had been organising a World Café, to take place in November, to talk to the young people of Dickens Heath about what they wanted from a youth facility. Sergeant Diane Sheppard had been arranging this - however we have heard that she is no longer Sergeant for Dickens Heath. Councillor Nargis Rashid has been trying to get in touch with the Police about the World Café – but without success. Councillor Rashid will get in touch with officers at Solihull MBC to follow this up.

Newsletter

A separate newsletter was distributed with the Dickens Heath Directory at the beginning of November – this was put together by a resident, and the Councillors thought it was very good. This resident is willing to put together a newsletter for December as well – there is a lot of news at this time of year. The Parish Council agreed that this should go ahead.

**Minute 103 (2018/19) Waterside Residents' Association (WRA) Requests for Funding**Waterside Residents' Association (WRA) – Request for Funding for Planters at Waterside

A resident, representing WRA, has asked whether the Parish Council would be prepared to fund planters and plants for Waterside. The planters would be sited to prevent cyclists cycling straight through the Waterside walkways, would add some colour to Waterside, and contribute towards next year's In Bloom. Councillor Maureen Holloway said that she would have no objection in principle, but any planters could not impair direct access to the small nature reserve or canal. The railings recently installed by the bridge at Waterside now prevent the movement of mowers over to the small nature reserve, nor can motorised scooters get through. The Waterside resident added that the railings should have been hinged but the contractor got it wrong. Dickens Heath Management Co. (DHMC) would need to give their agreement for planters at Waterside, as it is private land. The planters should also be staggered so as not to impede access, but planters are mobile and can be moved if necessary – this to be followed up with DHMC.

WRA Request for a Contribution towards the Repair of the Water Feature at Waterside

The water feature at Waterside is currently empty and awaiting repair – this will cost in the region of £135,000 and will be funded by placing an additional charge on around 430 leaseholders who pay their service charge to DHMC. The WRA wish to see the water feature repaired as it is a significant asset for the village which all residents benefit from. The Parish Council is one of these leaseholders and would therefore pay their share of the charge. The Chair asked the Parish Councillors for their views on the Parish Council providing an additional contribution towards the significant cost of the repair – as the Parish Council can place a charge on the whole community through the precept. Councillor Alan Scholes commented that Waterside is privately owned land, and he didn't feel that the PC could fund repairs on private property. Chair Maureen Holloway agreed that it could be setting a very dangerous precedent, the PC has never contributed to repairs on private land, and was indeed advised that it couldn't spend funds on the playground while it was on private land. Councillor Di Potter said that Waterside residents have been let down by SMBC, by the builders, and by DHMC who have not put any funds aside over the years for repairs. An additional £20 each year per leaseholder over 15 years could have funded these repairs. Councillor Trevor Eames commented that DHMC's spend is at their discretion, leaseholders don't get a say currently – but that should change. Anything that DHMC do is rechargeable to the leaseholders, and the service charge is generally higher than would be expected, but this is down to the terms of the leases. DHMC are the biggest management co. in Dickens Heath, and other management companies don't have such problems, they have reserves. However, a lot of issues are now arising across Dickens Heath, and costs are being recharged to leaseholders. Councillor Trevor Eames agreed with the other councillors – that if the Parish Council accepts the precedent of passing on to the community a share of a charge that is not their responsibility – if they pay once, then others will come forward and the PC will be asked to pay for theirs too. He also felt that the PC's accounts could be challenged. His view is that the PC should not contribute to a repair on this scale, other than as a leaseholder. Councillors David Jones and Doreen Wright also voiced concerns.

The Parish Council decided unanimously that they could not commit public funds towards the repair of the water feature at Waterside, other than what is due as a leaseholder.

### **Minute 104 (2018/19) Reports from Councillors who have attended Outside Groups or Events**

#### Solihull Area Committee

Councillor Trevor Eames gave an update of the SAC meeting at Balsall Common, at which a representative of SMBC spoke about the provision of affordable housing and how it is allocated to tenants.

### **Minute 105 (2018/19) Memorial Dedication Service and Remembrance Sunday Service**

These were both very successful occasions, with lots of the community coming together. It was agreed that for Remembrance Sunday 2019, around an additional 100 services were required, and that these should be professionally printed.

### **Minute 106 (2018/19) Christmas Carol Singing in the Village Centre**

Councillor David Jones advised that Rev Julie Humphries does not wish to lead the carol singing service this Christmas, for public liability insurance reasons. It was agreed that the Clerk should ask whether Andrew Simpkins and Rev Theresa Jones would be prepared to lead the carol singing, and a few dates were suggested.

### **Minute 107 (2018/19) Financial Matters**

Proposed by Councillor Wright, seconded by Councillor Potter, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the November 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 Agenda be approved – 3 direct debits and 22 payments totalling £18,139.96 including additional payments of £202.69 to BT for the phone/broadband and £30.20 for the Remembrance Sunday refreshments at Coffee Cloud.

As there is no full Parish Council meeting in December, the payment of the routine monthly payments for December was agreed.

#### Report on the Finances of the Council

This was received. It was noted that the additional welcome gates have now been paid for and there is currently a surplus of £114,000.

#### Budget and Precept for 2019/20

SMBC usually notify the PC of the tax base in early December – a date was therefore set in December to discuss the budget and precept for 2019/20.

### **Minute 108 (2018/19) Grant Applications**

A grant application has been received from Dickens Heath Football Club for £800 to cover a proportion of their pitch hire costs. All agreed that this should be approved.

### **Minute 109 (2018/19) Correspondence**

#### First Aid Awareness/How to Use a Defibrillator

Central Fast Response, who provided First Aid cover for the Remembrance Service, have offered to run a 2 hour course on First Aid Awareness or How to Use a Defibrillator. They can do this free of charge. It was agreed that the Clerk should ask them for further information.

#### Disabled Spots on Main St

A resident, who is a disabled driver, is frustrated that she can never park in the disabled spots outside Mortons because non disabled drivers use them. Can they be made more visible? Unfortunately, as Main St is a private road, the disabled spaces are effectively discretionary and are not enforceable – they would only be enforceable if SMBC were to adopt them.

Road Crossing Danger Spot on Dickens Heath Road near to Fishers Drive

A resident has raised her concern about this – there is a lowered kerb, but visibility is very restricted and the road is much busier now with the new developments. The bushes need cutting back, and also there needs to be some traffic calming measures. To be followed up with Matt Gardner of SMBC.

Danger Spot on Dickens Heath Road

A resident was walking along Dickens Heath Road, towards Tidbury Green, and the pavement is in a terrible state, the trees need cutting back and there is a problem with the street lighting. As he walked in the evening, he collided with a tree which protrudes well on to the footpath and injured himself – on investigation the next day, he found nails in the tree. This is now being dealt with by SMBC.

Dead End on Rumbush Lane

A new resident of Copperfield Court cannot believe how cars race up to the dead end on Rumbush Lane and then have to screech into a mad turn or reverse – she doesn't think that drivers see the dead end sign, and it is dangerous. There needs to be some traffic calming. Matt Gardner of SMBC to discuss this with SMBC Highways.

Water Logged Trees

Having seen the photos of the water logged oak trees on the David Wilson site, a resident is concerned that there is a similar issue on the Bellway site on the corner of New Meadow Close by the apartments. Matt Gardner of SMBC is looking into this.

Issues by New Developments on Rumbush Lane

A resident has raised concerns that the new Rumbush Lane street lighting has not been switched on, and the road markings outside the new developments are not painted and vehicles are pulling out into the path of passing traffic. This is the responsibility of the developers – it has been raised with Matt Gardner to chase up.

**Minute 110 (2018/19) Items for Next Agenda**

Remembrance Sunday 2019

**Meeting ended 9.55pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday January 8<sup>th</sup> 2019: 7.15pm The Parish Rooms**