

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday January 8th 2019 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.

No members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 111 (2018/19) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 112 (2018/19) Public Participation

None.

Minute 113 (2018/19) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 114 (2018/19) Report from Borough Councillors

Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins sent his apologies and an update. SMBC's report on last May's flooding is expected this month, and he has visited the Cleobury Lane area to check whether ditches have been cleared by landowners. Some have, but others have not – he has forwarded photos of these to senior officers at SMBC. He has also reported some fly tipping in this area. Councillor Hawkins has followed up on the street lights which are still not working on Rumbush Lane by the new developments – Western Power have had some problems which should be resolved soon. He also has concerns about early morning traffic congestion in Dickens Heath, and its effect on air quality – he will be reporting this also to SMBC officers. Councillor Dave Jones commented that the village really needs more rubbish bins – this to be followed up with Matt Gardner.

Minute 115 (2018/19) Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday November 13th 2018

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

Minute 116 (2018/19) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting

Bent Lamp Post on Main St

This is still to be rectified by Elegant Homes, Councillor Trevor Eames to follow up.

Key Holding for Library

Dickens Heath Management Co. have indicated that they would be prepared to hold keys for the library to enable community groups to use the Parish Council's space.

Minute 117 (2018/19) Planning Applications

Councillor Trevor Eames gave an update on 2 planning applications:

2018/03110 - 8 Broom Lane - Replacement of conservatory with single storey rear extension

2018/03455 - 2 Wadbarn - Conversion of 1 of 2 garages into living space

No comments on either of the planning applications.

The planning application for the community facility at the school is expected early in 2019.

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Minute 118 (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 progressing with the solicitors.

Solihull MBC Library officers have provided a plan of the proposed layout of the library first floor for the Parish Council to occupy and this was discussed. There is quite a large boiler room, and it may be possible to partition this to provide an upstairs toilet and small kitchen area for PC and community use – SMBC Library officers to follow this up.

Some of the furniture currently located on the first floor of the library would be available for the Parish Council to use, so it may not be necessary to take all of the furniture from 1 Wharf House – the purchaser may wish to buy some of it.

The Parish Council will need a solicitor to deal with the drawing up of the lease for co-occupation of the library – it was agreed that the Clerk should ask Kirstie Forrester of the Wilkes Partnership, as she is dealing with the sale of the long lease for 1 Wharf House and was recommended for her experience in Dickens Heath leases.

Minute 119 (2018/19) Update on Meetings with Solihull MBC and the Liquidators about the Village Green, Playground and Country Park (Small Nature Reserve)

Councillors Maureen Holloway and Alan Scholes, and the Clerk, have had a further meeting 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.

Savills had confirmed that the playground had been repaired and reopened, and that repairs had been made to the bridge from Waterside into the small Nature Reserve so that it was no longer a trip hazard. Councillor David Jones pointed out that the problems with the bridge had not been fully rectified – this to be followed up with Savills.

David Waterson of SMBC will be putting together some Heads of Terms, and will be producing a report for the SMBC Cabinet member, in order for SMBC to take on the freehold of the Village Green and small Nature Reserve and the PC to fund the maintenance costs. Councillor Alan Scholes asked whether, if the PC funds the maintenance costs, SMBC would cover the health and safety requirements.

David Waterson also said that one option could be to have the small Nature Reserve adopted as a public open space – this would normally include a commuted sum to cover maintenance for 10/20 years. Savills agreed to provide their current maintenance costs, and David will ask his SMBC colleagues to provide estimated adoption costs.

Minute 120 (2018/19) SMBC Issues

A meeting has been arranged with SMBC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator Matt Gardner – items for discussion to include Dickens Heath Rd lamp posts, and cutting back required by Miller and Carter.

Minute 121 (2018/19) Village Issues

Welcome to the Village Signs

All of the signs are now in place – the Parish Council thanked Councillor Alan Scholes for all of his hard work in achieving this.

Youth Group

There was some discussion about the Youth Group equipment which is still located in the Parish Rooms. Parish Council equipment is due to be PAT tested and the Youth Group have been asked if they wish their equipment to be tested at the same time.

Newsletter

A separate newsletter, put together by a village resident, was distributed with the Dickens Heath Directory at the beginning of November - and this was very successful. This resident put together a newsletter for December as well and the PC paid again for it to be distributed with the Dickens Heath Directory. The distributors said that it went out to all residents, but unfortunately several Councillors and many residents said that they did receive the Directory but did not receive the newsletter. It was agreed that an alternative approach should be tried for a March newsletter – the Councillors would arrange for it to be hand delivered.

Hanging Baskets Summer 2019

Plantscape have provided a quote for the same number of hanging baskets/flower boxes/watering as in previous years. The cost has increased slightly, by 1.5%, on last year. The Parish Council felt that baskets should be ordered for a few more lamp posts – to be located by the new developments. It was suggested that hanging baskets could be located on 2 lamp posts by the welcome gates on Dickens Heath Rd by the Bellway site, and on 4 lamp posts on Rumbush Lane – 2 each at the entrances to Dykens Way and Beach Lane. This was agreed, the Clerk to contact Plantscape.

Andrew Simpkins of Dickens Heath Church

Andrew Simpkins will be moving away from the area in the Spring, it is not yet known who will replace him at the church. It was agreed that the Parish Council should show their appreciation for Andrew and Sarah Simpkins, and their input into village life over the past few years, and all were in favour of the purchase of a gift and flowers. Andrew has asked whether the Parish Council would support the continuation of Festival on the Green. It was agreed that the Festival on the Green needed a residents' committee to take it forward - the Parish Council could advertise for this, and would provide support to the committee. It was agreed that Councillors Dave Jones and Trevor Eames would meet with Andrew to discuss this.

Minute 122 (2018/19) Reports from Councillors who have attended Outside Groups or EventsCommunity Facility at Dickens Heath School

Councillor Nargis Rashid met with Chris Barr of Solihull MBC for an update on the community facility at the school. It will be a modular build, so it is 70% pre-constructed. Chris talked about the consultation that SMBC had done, and that a business plan was going to Cabinet in the New Year. They had hoped to get together a focus group of young people to get some input into how the facility might meet the needs of young people in Dickens Heath – an initiative by the Police has not progressed, and now the Police team covering the vicinity has changed once again. Councillor Rashid agreed to approach the leaders of the Youth Group and the Fiveway Café to see if they could provide some input.

Minute 123 (2018/19) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Holloway, seconded by Councillor Potter, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the January 8th 2019 Agenda be approved – 3 direct debits and 15 payments totalling £4,534.23 for January including additional payments of £140.26 to Opus for gas, £210.00 for an EPC for the Parish Rooms and an increased payment of £983.89 for the annual insurance which includes additional insurance for the memorial and welcome gates. Plus 3 direct debits and 21 payments totalling £5,043.99 for December 2018.

Report on the Finances of the Council

This was received and Councillor Di Potter signed to verify the bank reconciliation to the bank statement as at December 31st 2018.

The accounts are currently showing a surplus of £105,000, with a projected end of year surplus of £95,000.

Staff Pay Award 2019/20

The National Joint Council for Local Government Services has agreed new pay scales to be implemented from April 1st 2019. It was agreed that Parish Council staff should be awarded the uplift relevant to their scale.

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Budget and Precept for 2019/20

The Parish Council held an informal budget meeting in December to discuss budget proposals and the precept for 2019/20. The budget figures resulting from this discussion were presented, and formally agreed by the Parish Council, but will inevitably be partially estimated as we do not know when the move from the Parish Rooms to the library will actually happen. In the last year, there has been a slight increase in the tax base (number of dwellings) from 2,177 to 2,219 and the Parish Council will also receive its first yearly allocation of CIL monies – which is £13,023 for 2019/20. CIL monies need to be spent on capital items, for example a new playground.

The Parish Council agreed, all in favour, that these additional funds would allow the precept charge to residents to be reduced. **Resolved** that the precept charge to residents should be reduced by 5%, with the Band D Precept Charge reducing from £39.91 to £37.91. This will result in a total precept of £84,122 for 2019/20.

Insurance Renewal for 2019/20

The Parish Council is in a long term agreement with Zurich, and the renewal premium for 2019/20 was agreed – this includes additional cover for the memorial and welcome gates.

Minute 124 (2018/19) Annual Parish Meeting

As it is an election year, it was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting should be held on Tuesday March 12th 2019. The Clerk asked whether the Community Chest fund bids should be discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting – the Parish Council felt that this would be too tight a deadline and that the successful bids should be decided at the April PC meeting instead.

Minute 125 (2018/19) Website - Map of Dickens Heath

There is a downloadable map of Dickens Heath on the website – the Clerk asked whether this should be updated to take account of the new developments. This was agreed.

Minute 126 (2018/19) CorrespondenceScanlon School of Irish Dancing

Scanlon School of Irish Dancing thanked the Parish Council for their Community Chest grant for new competition outfits – their Oireachtas team of young dancers have been very successful.

Consultation on Proposal to Transfer Powers of Police Commissioner to the WM Mayor in 2020

There was no public interest in the last election for the Police Commissioner, it is therefore proposed that the Mayor appoint a Police Commissioner who would also be Deputy Mayor. It was agreed that the Parish Council should support these proposals.

Grievances against Parish Councillors – the Ledbury Case

This case, in which Ledbury Town Councillors were accused of bullying by the Clerk, has led to recommendations that grievance procedures should be re-examined. It was agreed that this should be looked at by the new Parish Council following the May elections.

May 2019 Election Timetable

The Annual Meeting of the Council must take place in May, after the election, within a certain timeframe. The Annual Meeting is currently scheduled for May 14th 2019, which will meet the requirements.

Rumbush Lane Dead End

SMBC propose to improve the signage at the 'cul de sac'/dead-end of Rumbush Lane in the village centre.

Unstable Brick Walls on Old Dickens Heath Rd

Concerns have been raised about 2 unstable brick walls which are beside the bins behind the flats at the Clock island end of Old Dickens Heath Rd. RMG the management co. have obtained quotes and will be instructing the repair.

Double Yellow Lines Required on Dickens Heath Rd alongside the Village Green

The Parish Council have formally requested that SMBC put double yellow lines in this location, residents are still expressing their concern and will also contact SMBC to support the Parish Council's request.

Citizen's Advice Bureau

CAB Solihull have been unsuccessful in their application to provide advice services for SMBC, they are losing 60% of their income and are appealing to parish councils for support. There followed some debate about whether the Parish Council should provide any support, with varying views. Both CAB and Age Concern have provided an advice service in Solihull, SMBC have decided that the service should be provided by one organisation – which is Age Concern. SMBC have therefore decided that funds should all be allocated to Age Concern rather than divided between the 2 organisations. On this basis, the Parish Council agreed that unfortunately they could not support CAB.

Minute 127 (2018/19) Items for Next Agenda

Meeting ended 9.05pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday February 12th 2019: 7.15pm The Parish Rooms