

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday February 12th 2019 in the Parish Rooms, Waterside

Present:

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

5 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 128 (2018/19) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Councillors David Jones and Diane Potter.

Minute 129 (2018/19) Public Participation

Proposed Prohibition of Driving on Braggs Farm Lane

Solihull MBC have proposed an experimental closure of Braggs Farm Lane to through traffic, and 2 residents spoke in favour of this closure. Points made included; the road has no footpath, but is popular with pedestrians, cyclists, runners, horse riders etc. as it allows easy access to countryside and the Nature Reserve; Braggs Farm Lane is mainly single track and very narrow – but it is used by vehicles travelling at high speed as well as large vehicles; if the Lane is not closed, it will only get busier with all the additional development. The Parish Council and others are concerned that the closure of Braggs Farm Lane will lead to more congestion through Dickens Heath, but these residents added that they do not believe that most of the traffic would go through the village, but would go via Cleobury and Lady Lanes. In addition, Braggs Farm Lane was closed for 6 months over the summer and this didn't cause increased congestion through the village. Another resident commented that Dickens Heath simply doesn't have the infrastructure to allow traffic to escape the village at peak times. The Parish Council will discuss this as a later agenda item.

Village Green

A resident asked for an update on the Village Green. Negotiations between the PC, SMBC and the Liquidators are progressing - the Parish Council's aim is for SMBC to take on responsibility for the Small Nature Reserve at Waterside, and for the Village Green to be protected and in public hands. SMBC's legal department are now looking at the details.

Minute 130 (2018/19) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 131 (2018/19) Report from Borough Councillors

None.

Minute 132 (2018/19) Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday January 8th 2019

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

Minute 133 (2018/19) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting

Bridge at Waterside

The trip hazard at the bridge has now been rectified by Savills.

Youth Group Equipment in Parish Rooms

The Youth Group leader has now collected their equipment.

Fiveway Café

Councillor Nargis Rashid reported that a World Café consultation will be taking place at the end of February.

Bent Lamp Post on Main St

This has still not been rectified by Elegant Homes, Karl at Dickens Heath Management Co. is also chasing it up.

Minute 134 (2018/19) Planning Applications

No comments.

Minute 135 (2018/19) Update on the Parish Council's Proposed Move to the Library and Sale of 1 Wharf House

The Parish Council has continued to have meetings with SMBC Library officers, and the solicitors are now working on the lease for the co-occupation of the building in readiness for when the sale of the Parish Rooms completes.

Minute 136 (2018/19) Update on Meetings with Solihull MBC and the Liquidators about the Village Green, Playground and Country Park (Small Nature Reserve)

As stated during public participation, members of the Parish Council are meeting regularly with representatives of the Liquidators, Savills and Solihull MBC to progress this, and the latest meeting took place today. Solihull MBC are finalising draft documents, and there should be further progress to report at the April PC meeting – it is all looking very positive.

Minute 137 (2018/19) Solihull Local Plan Review

Councillor Trevor Eames gave an update on a meeting that Parish Councillors had with SMBC officers. The previous Plan had included 2 sites in Dickens Heath parish: the South Shirley site has been completely removed from the Plan; the second site between Whitlocks End and Birchy Close, involving proposals from Richborough and Persimmon Homes for 700 homes, has been significantly amended. The housing on this site has been reduced to 350 – with 100 on the Persimmon site and 250 on the Richborough site. Richborough had intended to provide replacement and upgraded sports pitches along with a community sports hub out of the development proceeds, but just 2 pitches remain in this version of the Plan. The impact of additional housing on Dickens Heath has therefore been significantly reduced. Residents have until March 15th 2019 to make their comments.

Minute 138 (2018/19) Proposed Prohibition of Driving on Braggs Farm Lane and Proposed Double Yellow Lines on Dickens Heath Road

The Parish Council receives lots of complaints about vehicles parked on Dickens Heath Rd alongside the Village Green – that it is dangerous, and that those parking in that location have off road parking. The Parish Council has made many representations about this to SMBC, and are very pleased that SMBC have agreed to trial some double yellow lines in this location.

Along with these double yellow lines, SMBC intend to trial a closure to through traffic of Braggs Farm Lane. The Parish Council's view of this is that the centre of Dickens Heath is very congested with traffic at peak times, and that it is very necessary for motorists to be able to use Braggs Farm Lane as a means of getting out of the village when it is blocked. Councillor Maureen Holloway feels that it would be dangerous to close Braggs Farm Lane at this time because of the traffic. Councillor Trevor Eames said that he had carried out a survey on a typical morning between 7.30 and 9am, and 147 vehicles used Braggs Farm Lane to get out of Dickens Heath, with just 15 vehicles coming in. Most of the vehicles were not driving fast. Councillor Eames feels that getting out of the village during the morning peak is a real problem, it is very congested, and causes problems for the bus service. Getting in to Dickens Heath is no problem. He said that there have been no reported accidents on Braggs Farm Lane, whereas there have been on Cleobury Lane. Councillor Holloway added that the Nature Reserve and canal can be accessed from other parts of the village, and not just Braggs Farm Lane. It was acknowledged that SMBC's consultation had received a majority of responses in favour of the closure of Braggs Farm Lane, but the Parish Council needs to take

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a broader view of the proposal. For example – of the residents voicing an opinion on The Only Way is Dickens Facebook group, 15 were against and just 1 for the closure. The Parish Council has received more emails objecting to the closure than supporting it – due to traffic congestion in the village. Solihull MBC want to close Braggs Farm Lane, but the Parish Council agreed that their overall view was that it was the wrong time to close Braggs Farm Lane – because of the views of the wider community and given the prospect of having to cope with several hundred additional properties. Councillor Alan Scholes commented that dead end roads can encourage the presence of drug dealing, he also suggested that maybe Braggs Farm Lane should be made one way. Other comments made were that there should be a ban on heavy goods vehicles using the lane, and that more passing points would help. Councillor Trevor Eames added that SMBC do not want to spend any money on Braggs Farm Lane, and that access for Dickens Heath needs to be properly sorted out with the Solihull Local Plan, and therefore any decision on Braggs Farm Lane should wait and it should be kept open in the meantime.

All agreed that they wished to see Braggs Farm Lane kept open, Councillor Eames to draft a response to SMBC.

Minute 139 (2018/19) Village Issues

Youth/Community Facility

There is still no planning application as yet for the facility at the school.

Newsletter

A single sheet newsletter is being prepared for March. Following the problems with distribution of the December newsletter, it was agreed that Look Local be asked to distribute the March newsletter.

Hanging Baskets Summer 2019

The quote from Plantscape, which included the additional baskets by the new developments, was agreed – the Clerk to order the hanging baskets for the summer.

Festival on the Green 2019

As Andrew Simpkins is moving away from the area soon, he has asked whether the Parish Council would be prepared to again make a contribution towards Festival on the Green, and also whether the Parish Council could act as 'banker' for the event. The Parish Council has a separate account for 'In Bloom' which only processes a few transactions each year, and so it was agreed that the transactions for Festival on the Green could go through this account, and that the Parish Council would once again make a contribution towards the costs of the event.

In Bloom 2019

It was agreed that Dickens Heath should enter In Bloom for 2019, and that Dickens Heath School and Dickens Heath Allotments be asked whether they would like to be involved. The Clerk to ask the SMBC Ecologist whether any further volunteering days in the Nature Reserve have been planned.

Minute 140 (2018/19) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Rashid, seconded by Councillor Holloway, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the February 12th 2019 Agenda be approved – 4 direct debits and 15 payments totalling £6,631.17 for February including additional payments of £131.34 to Opus for gas, £205.78 to BT for the phone and broadband, and £149.21 for the printing and distribution by Look Local magazine of a March PC newsletter.

Report on the Finances of the Council

The accounts are currently showing a surplus of £102,000, with a projected end of year surplus of £97,000. It was agreed that the Clerk contact BT about the transfer of the contract to the library in due course. It was also agreed that, as the PC desktop computer is now around 7 years old, a new laptop should be purchased – the Clerk to look into this, with a maximum budget of £1,000.

Appointment of Internal Auditor

It was agreed that the Clerk ask Bill Robinson whether he can again carry out the internal audit for this year.

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Minute 141 (2018/19) May 2019 Elections

The Clerk circulated advice to Councillors on purdah – which will begin on March 26th 2019.

Minute 142 (2018/19) Annual Parish Meeting

The new Sergeant for the area, Sgt Paula McDowell, has been invited to attend the APM to meet residents. It was agreed that the Clerk order the usual refreshments for the evening.

Minute 143 (2018/19) Community Chest Grants

The Community Chest Fund has been publicized, with a deadline of March 31st 2019. Due to the elections and purdah, it was agreed that the deadline should be put back to April 30th 2019. This will allow the award of the successful grants to take place after the elections. The Clerk to arrange for this to be re-advertised.

Minute 144 (2018/19) CorrespondenceRequest for a Defibrillator in Dickens Heath

A resident recently had cause to ring 999, and so would request that there is a defibrillator located in Dickens Heath. This request has been considered by the PC before – a defibrillator needs to be in an accessible site, or an external installation with a power supply. It lasts for around 5 years and then needs replacing, and statistics show that such defibrillators are rarely used – eg. less than 10 uses per year across the whole country. It is therefore very expensive per use. The Parish Council agreed that nothing has changed, there is still no suitable outside site in Dickens Heath, and there is a defibrillator in the doctor's surgery.

Parish Council Anniversary

Dickens Heath PC will be 10 years old on April 1st 2019!

Disabled Spots on Main St

A resident with a blue badge has said that she often struggles to park as there are never any disabled spots free when she goes to the GP. Unfortunately the disabled spaces on Main St are not currently enforceable as it is private land. The resident could ask the GP surgery if they could appeal to patients not to use their disabled spaces unless a blue badge holder.

Dangerous Parked Cars Alongside Village Green on Dickens Heath Rd

Many emails from residents have been received in support of the request for additional double yellow lines on Dickens Heath Rd alongside the Village Green.

Transport for West Midlands Consultation to Tackle Anti Social Behaviour on Buses

TfWM are proposing to introduce Bye-laws on buses to tackle anti-social behaviour. The consultation runs until March 29th 2019 and it was agreed that the Parish Council should support this.

Textile Recycling Banks

The charity Scope have asked whether there are any suitable sites in Dickens Heath to locate a textile recycling bank. The Clerk to reply that unfortunately there aren't.

Great British Spring Clean

This is taking place between March 22nd and April 23rd 2019. It was agreed that the Clerk should ask Councillor Dave Jones about taking part in this and organising a litter pick.

Cars Parked on 'Pavement' adjacent to Ramp to Waterside Car Park

A resident has complained that cars park on the bin area adjacent to the ramp to the Waterside underground car park. This often means that pushchairs or wheelchairs aren't able to get past without going into the road. This to be raised with Dickens Heath Management Co.

Minute 145 (2018/19) Items for Next Agenda

None.

Minute 146 (2018/19) It was Resolved that, in accordance with paras I and II Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public should be asked to withdraw due to the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Minute 147 (2018/19) Village Green and Small Nature Reserve

Councillor Maureen Holloway gave a more detailed update on the meeting that day at Savills with the Liquidators and Solihull MBC. SMBC seem willing to adopt the small Nature Reserve, but would be looking for a commuted sum, from the Liquidators, for maintenance. SMBC would be proposing a long lease of the Village Green to the Parish Council, at a peppercorn rent. The Parish Council will require a 'land lawyer' – it was agreed that the Clerk should approach the Wilkes Partnership.

Minute 148 (2018/19) Proposed Move from 1 Wharf House to the Library

SMBC have suggested that the required changes to the lease to allow co-occupation of the library would be more straightforward if no alterations were being made to the 1st floor before the PC moves in. Any alterations to be assessed once the PC has moved in.

Meeting ended 9.35pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday March 12th 2019: 6pm The Parish Rooms