

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday March 12th 2019 at 7.30pm 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.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Councillors; Ken Hawkins, Richard Holt

13 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Minutes of the Previous Year's Meeting held on May 8th 2018

These were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. Report from the Parish Council Chair – Maureen Holloway

Chair Maureen Holloway summarised some of the highlights and issues of the last year, which included:

- Welcome to Dickens Heath gates installed on Rumbush Lane, Dickens Heath Rd and Tythebarn Lane.
- Installation of the memorial stone as a focal point for the Remembrance Service.
- Award of a bronze medal for the first year of Dickens Heath in Bloom.
- Regular negotiations taking place with the Liquidators and SMBC, with the aim of SMBC acquiring the Village Green and leasing it to the Parish Council.
- Regular negotiations taking place with SMBC regarding the Parish Council relocating to the first floor of the library, and the Parish Rooms being marketed.
- A successful campaign to retain the under threat direct bus service from Dickens Heath to Solihull.
- Over the 4 years of this Parish Council's term, a reduction in the PC element of the council tax of 11% - including a 5% reduction for the coming year.

Councillor Holloway thanked the whole of the team that make up the Parish Council for all of their hard work, and thanked Dickens Heath residents for their input and involvement. The full report can be seen on the Parish Council website, and a summary in the Dickens Heath Directory for March.

4. Blythe Borough Councillors invited to Speak

Councillor Ken Hawkins congratulated the Parish Council on a very successful year, and on being a high performing parish council. He gave an update on some of the Dickens Heath issues that he is acting on – Councillor Hawkins considers traffic to be the number one concern for Dickens Heath, and he will be meeting with SMBC officers as this needs to be dealt with. He assured those present that he is against the Dickens Heath site 4 in the Solihull Local Plan – no one seems to like these proposals for the site, not even the developers as they had wanted to deliver improved sporting facilities and they can't do so in this proposal. Councillor Hawkins has been organising a petition against site 4, which has 1,150 signatures, and he will be presenting it to SMBC planning officers. Councillor Richard Holt added that he would reiterate all that Councillor Hawkins had said, and that they very much wished to continue working as a team with the Parish Council.

5. Issues of Particular Local Importance

Solihull Local Plan Review – Loss of Sports Pitches

A resident raised concern about the SLP Review proposal for site 4, which only includes 2 sports pitches when there are currently 6 sports pitches on the site which are all fully utilised. If the development goes ahead, will those pitches go in first, or would the sports clubs have to wait? Councillor Trevor Eames replied that the SLP states that alternative sports pitches would have to be found elsewhere, but it doesn't say where that might be. But they shouldn't be further away. The SLP will not get through the Public Enquiry unless alternative sites have been identified, or Sport England will step in. The sports grounds issue will have to be dealt with before any houses are built.

Community/Youth Facility at the School

A resident commented that it has taken a long time for the community facility to come to fruition. Councillor Eames replied that the funds available for the community/youth facility have built up over time from the progressive developments, including the recent Bellway development.

Proposal to Close Braggs Farm Lane to Through Traffic

A resident said that he has observed a greater volume of traffic using Braggs Farm Lane to escape Dickens Heath in the mornings. Traffic is now backing up on Braggs Farm Lane and so, if it were to be closed, the congestion through Dickens Heath would be much worse. He has made representations against this closure, with the support of Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins. Councillor Hawkins added that Braggs Farm Lane would be a lovely green route, but given the existing traffic issues it is not the right time. The traffic impact on the whole village needs to be looked at before there is any closure. He is fairly confident that Braggs Farm Lane will stay open for the moment, but it is showing wear from all the traffic. He also confirmed that Braggs Farm Lane has been improved, some work has been done on the ditches, and the Lane didn't flood in all the rain of today. Parish Councillor Trevor Eames also added that although people say that Braggs Farm Lane is dangerous, there have been no serious accidents. And in the morning it is mainly a one way stream of traffic leaving Dickens Heath.

Traffic on Main St

A resident said that cars sometimes go very fast on Main St. Councillor Trevor Eames replied that unfortunately Main St is a private road. Dickens Heath Management Co. could put in traffic calming, but it is unlikely that they would do so due to the cost. SMBC are however looking at putting Traffic Regulation Orders on private roads.

Meeting ended 8pm