

# The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday May 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 in Dickens Heath Library

### **Present:**

**Dickens Heath Parish Councillors;** Trevor Eames, Maureen Holloway (Chair), Diane Potter, Nargis Rashid, Mike Small, Doreen Wright.

11 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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### **Minute 1 (2019/20) Election of Chair**

Councillor Nargis Rashid proposed that Councillor Maureen Holloway be elected again as Chair, seconded by Councillors Doreen Wright and Di Potter. Councillor Holloway accepted the position of Chair.

### **Minute 2 (2019/20) To Receive the Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

This was signed.

### **Minute 3 (2019/20) Apologies for Absence**

None. Councillor Nargis Rashid may have to leave the meeting before the end.

### **Minute 4 (2019/20) Public Participation**

#### Repair of Library Sign

A resident asked whether the library sign, which is incomplete, will be repaired. The Chair replied that it will be replaced at some point by a new sign for both the Library and Parish Offices.

#### Update on Festival on the Green 2019

An update on Festival on the Green was received – bookings are up by 50% on last year, there will be more food vendors, a dance school will be performing as will the school choirs from Dickens Heath and St. Peter's schools, plus there will be music acts and a children's entertainer. It is taking shape, and will be a bit different to previous years' events. The Food and Craft Fair in the Village Hall will take place a little later than usual in order to accommodate the activities of the Festival.

### **Minute 5 (2019/20) Declarations of Acceptance of Office**

These were received from all Councillors.

### **Minute 6 (2019/20) Declarations of Pecuniary Interests and Code of Conduct Agreements**

These were received from all Councillors.

### **Minute 7 (2019/20) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

Requests for dispensations were received and agreed – which allows all Parish Councillors to discuss the budget, set the precept and discuss Councillors' allowances.

Councillor Mike Small also declared an interest in the discussion of Community Chest grants as his wife is involved with JAMS Publishing who have submitted a grant application.

### **Minute 8 (2019/20) Co-option to the Parish Council Vacancy**

Three applications have been received – it was agreed by all members of the Parish Council that former Councillor Alan Scholes should be co-opted. The Clerk to arrange for the necessary paperwork to be completed.

**Minute 9 (2019/20) Report from the Borough Councillors**

None present, it is Solihull MBC Full Council this evening.

**Minute 10 (2019/20) To Decide Whether to Elect a Vice Chair**

It was decided that it was not necessary to elect a Vice Chair.

**Minute 11 (2019/20) To Decide Whether to Accept Councillors' Allowances**

The scale of allowances for parish councils is based on Solihull MBC's councillor allowances – with the recommendation that a parish council of the size of Dickens Heath can pay councillor allowances up to 10% of the SMBC Basic Allowance, which equates to £924 p.a. All agreed that this allowance should be paid to elected councillors, with the Chair receiving the recommended 20% of the SMBC Basic Allowance.

**Minute 12 (2019/20) Training for New Councillors**

Councillor Mike Small to look at WALC's schedule of training for new councillors.

**Minute 13 (2019/20) To Agree Dates of Council Meetings for the Year**

The proposed schedule was agreed. Meetings will be held at 7.15pm in Dickens Heath Library on the second Tuesday of each month, and there will be no set meetings in August or December.

**Minute 14 (2019/20) To Resolve Whether to Establish any Committees**

It was agreed that there was no need for any formal committees. Councillor Trevor Eames will continue to circulate information about significant planning applications to all Councillors.

**Minute 15 (2019/20) To Appoint Representatives to Sit on Outside Bodies**

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright will continue to attend SAC (Solihull Area Committee), with other Parish Councillors attending as and when.

**Minute 16 (2019/20) To Agree Cheque Signatories**

All Councillors to be cheque signatories for the bank account, plus the Clerk for administration purposes only. The Clerk to arrange for the necessary paperwork to be completed.

**Minute 17 (2019/20) To Agree to Review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

These were reviewed in September 2017. It was agreed that they should be reviewed in the next few months.

**Minute 18 (2019/20) The General Power of Competence**

The new Parish Council meets the requirements for taking the General Power of Competence – with the required number of elected Councillors and a qualified Clerk.

It was **Resolved** that the Parish Council should take the General Power of Competence for the term of this Parish Council.

**Minute 19 (2019/20) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> 2019**

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

**Minute 20 (2019/20) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting**Defibrillator

The village GP Practice is very supportive of a proposal for a defibrillator on an outside wall in the village centre, and the Clerk has received some information from West Midlands Ambulance Service. Councillor Mike Small to look into this further.

In Bloom 2019

Councillor Nargis Rashid continues to liaise with the School about their planters, which will be sited just inside the school gates. Dickens Heath Allotments Association have agreed to plant up around the Welcome gates near Miller and Carter, and the Parish Council suggested a bold and bright colour scheme. DHAA can also put out a plea for allotments members who live in Dickens Heath to help with In Bloom – the Parish Council agreed that any help with watering the many planters would be greatly appreciated.

Litter Pickers at the Library

There are still some full size litter pickers at the Library, and they have asked for some children's litter pickers from SMBC. Officers at SMBC have offered to meet with the Parish Council regarding the supporting of community litter picks – the Parish Council agreed this. Tim of Coffee Cloud suggested that a litter pick could be organised on a Sunday morning from Coffee Cloud – with the initiative called 'Rubbish Friends'. The Parish Council agreed that they would very much be in support of this – the Clerk to contact the Scouts to see if they would be interested in participating.

Library Lease

The Parish Council's solicitor has received the Heads of Terms regarding the lease for the first floor of the Library. The Parish Council do not intend to include any proposed alterations to the premises in the negotiation of the lease. The Solicitor is concerned that any alterations would be much more difficult to obtain permission for once the lease has been signed. It was agreed that the negotiations of the lease needed to include the Parish Council's long term wishes to install a separate private meeting room, a kitchen and toilet – all by agreement with the landlord.

SMBC Nature Reserve

The SMBC Ecologist has confirmed that there are currently no plans for any further volunteering days in the Nature Reserve. They are planning to do some coppicing of willow within the attenuation pond, but this will be in the Winter following the end of nesting season.

Canal Towpaths

Chair Maureen Holloway had secured a meeting with an officer from the Canal & River Trust to discuss our local towpaths, however the meeting today was unfortunately cancelled at the last minute. This officer had said that they had a good number of volunteers available to do work on local towpaths, and they could take this forward if the Parish Council could provide some funding for materials. It is hoped that the meeting can be rearranged for the near future to discuss this further.

**Minute 21 (2019/20) Planning Applications**

There is just one planning application which has been received late today:

2019/01280 - 20 Marshfield - Single storey extension to rear.

Councillor Trevor Eames to have a look at this.

**Minute 22 (2019/20) Financial Matters**

1. Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Holloway, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the May 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 Agenda be approved – 4 direct debits and 13 payments totalling £3,566.27. This included additional payments of £13.28 to Waterplus, £336.91 to BT for the phone/broadband and installation of the new phone line and £164.00 to Bill Robinson for the internal audit.

2. Report on the Finances of the Council

The Parish Council is currently holding a large amount of cash funds - £196,176.25 has been received as the net proceeds of the sale of 1 Wharf House, and a cheque for £12,648.91 CIL monies has also been received. The Parish Council's current surplus is £318,000. We have not yet been billed for any of our share of the library costs – so yearly projections are not complete at this transitional stage.

3. To Consider Repayment of the PWLB Loans

In order to purchase and refurbish 1 Wharf House, the Parish Council at the time took out 2 fixed rate loans with the Public Works Loans Board. These offered very favourable rates at the time – but are high in comparison to current rates. Any early repayment of a PWLB loan will result in a comparison of the rate of interest on the loan with the rate of interest that the PWLB can earn if it re-lends that money today. If the comparison is unfavourable, as it is with these loans, then a penalty has to be paid. In this case the penalty is substantial. A number of recent quotes have been received from the PWLB (with rates changing twice a day) and the loans will cost in the order of £190,000 to pay off with around £30,000 of this being a penalty. If interest rates rise, this penalty will reduce, but interest rates are currently going down. There followed some discussion about this with the following points being made – a greater amount of interest than the penalty will be paid over the life of the loans, cash deposits cannot currently raise much in the way of interest and the Parish Council cannot make risky investments, the books should be cleared for any future Parish Council. It was agreed that the best use of the cash balance was to pay off the PWLB loans. Proposed by Councillor Holloway, seconded by Councillor Potter, all in favour, it was **Resolved** that the loans be repaid in full. The Clerk and Councillor Di Potter to follow up on this.

4. Risk Assessment and Management Document 2019/20

This was received and approved.

5. Internal Audit for 2018/19

This took place on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2019 and went well. The full report will go to the June 2019 meeting.

**Minute 23 (2019/20) Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2018/19**

1. The Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 was approved, and signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO.
2. The Annual Accounting Statements 2018/19 were approved, and signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO.

**Minute 24 (2019/20) Community Chest Fund**

The Community Chest Fund for 2019 has been oversubscribed with 7 applications received. The Parish Council all agreed that they wished to make grants to all applicants and have allocated amounts of between £80 and £500 to JAMS Publishing, Dickens Heath Food & Craft Market, Dickens Heath Scouts, Scanlon School of Irish Dancing, Dickens Heath Allotments Association, Ordinary Magic, and Dickens Heath School PTFA.

**Minute 25 (2019/20) In Bloom 2019**

Councillors to plan the planting out of the planters, bedding plants and compost to be purchased.

**Minute 26(2019/20) Village Green/Playground/Small Nature Reserve**

A further meeting with the Liquidators and Solihull MBC is in the diary for June.

**Minute 27 (2019/20) Councillors who have attended any Outside Events**

WALC Playground Maintenance Course

Councillors Nargis Rashid, Doreen Wright and the Clerk attended this very interesting course run by WALC – in order to gain some insight into how the Parish Council might manage the Playground, if the negotiations with the Liquidators and SMBC are successful. The course covered the various regular checks and inspections that would be required. Councillor Rashid reiterated that any choice of replacement playground equipment should include the input of Dickens Heath School pupils.

Solihull Area Committee

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright attended this and have information on a Credit Union Consortium that includes Solihull.

SMBC Localism Event

Councillor Trevor Eames attended this – Solihull Borough is now split into 3 sections, with a focus on community self help guided by SMBC. Dickens Heath is in 'West'.

**Minute 28 (2019/20) Community Use of Library 1<sup>st</sup> Floor**Anti-Social Behaviour

Library staff have had some problems with teenagers – who have gone up to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, when the Parish Council staff are not present, and tried to climb over the balcony and have thrown food down at the library staff. They have also brought their bikes into the library, locked the front door, and opened the fire exit which disrupts the alarm system. Our local PCSO has been contacted, but there has been no response. This is being followed up with the Police. The Parish Council agreed that any continuation of this anti-social behaviour would need to be discussed with SMBC Library officers, maybe CCTV on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor should be looked into?

Yoga

A request has been received to run yoga classes – it was agreed that the Parish Council is not ready yet to let out the space, policies need to be agreed first.

**Minute 29(2019/20) Grant Applications**

A grant of £250 for Festival on the Green 2019 was agreed.

**Minute 30 (2019/20) Correspondence**Noise from new Chalice 'Restaurant'

The Parish Council have received a couple of complaints from residents about noise on Good Friday from the new restaurant on the site of the Chalice, the music was very loud and customers were drinking in the street. Councillor Trevor Eames advised that this needs to be monitored – the Police won't get involved, and SMBC will only take action if it is an on-going problem. If it continues to be a nuisance, it may be in contravention of the lease and DHMC could be approached.

Substation on Bellway Site

This is dangerous, and children need to be deterred from going near it. The Parish Council to follow this up.

**Minute 31 (2019/20) Items for next agenda**

Internal Audit report.

**Minute 32 (2019/20) 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 33 (2019/20) Village Green/Playground/Small Nature Reserve**

The negotiations for Solihull MBC to take back ownership of the Village Green and Small Nature Reserve from the Liquidators were discussed.

**Meeting ended 9.10pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday June 11<sup>th</sup> 2019: 7.15pm in Dickens Heath Library**