

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday October 8th 2019 in the Library, Dickens Heath

Present:

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

4 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 93 (2019/20) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 94 (2019/20) Public Participation

Lack of Benches in Dickens Heath

A resident said that there are few places to sit in the village, a few benches would be nice and maybe they could be sponsored. Chair Maureen Holloway asked the resident if they could think about some potential locations that they would like the Parish Council to consider for a bench.

Minute 95 (2019/20) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 96 (2019/20) Report from Borough Councillors

Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins sent his apologies.

Minute 97 (2019/20) Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Tuesday September 10th 2019

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

Minute 98 (2019/20) Actions from the Previous Meeting

Village Green

In preparation for the Parish Council taking responsibility for the Village Green, a meeting is being arranged with Phil of Dickens Heath Management Co to discuss maintenance arrangements. Councillor Alan Scholes has also contacted SMBC for advice on dealing with possible Traveller encampments - Chris Barr of SMBC to brief the Parish Council.

Bus Shelter or Bench at Clock Island

Matt, our SMBC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, can assist in the case of a bench. Transport for West Midlands criteria for a bus shelter include a requirement for 50 passengers boarding per day, Ward Councillor and Highways Authority support and a consultation with frontages. The Parish Council agreed that they would like to go forward with the request for a bus shelter.

Solar Christmas Trees by New Developments

A reply is still awaited from Bellway for permission to install trees on the new lamp posts – this to be chased again.

Minute 99 (2019/20) Planning Applications

There were two additional planning applications:

2019/02067 - a rear/side single storey extension, second storey front/side extension over existing garage, loft conversion and alterations to front porch at 66 Tythe Barn Lane.

2019/02487 - tree works including the removal of an oak tree at 4 & 6 Meadow Pleck Lane.

The planning application for 66 Tythe Barn Lane is being resubmitted having been originally submitted in August 2019. The application states that no trees will be affected, however it involves trees with Tree Preservation Orders and the applicant has been asked to supply a tree report. It was agreed that the Parish Council's previous comments that the scale of these extensions is over intensive should be reiterated.

The planning application for 4 & 6 Meadow Pleck Lane involves the removal of an oak tree, but it is not a strong specimen and it was agreed that this should be left in the hands of the SMBC Tree Officer.

No comments on the other planning application.

Minute 100 (2019/20) SMBC Proposal to Reduce Library Opening Hours

Councillor Trevor Eames and Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins had found out about this proposal, going to the SMBC Stronger and Safer Communities Committee, at the last minute - which would cut the Dickens Heath Library opening hours by 5 to just 14 hours per week. 14 of the libraries in Solihull have been reviewed - with a proposal to reduce the hours in 9 of these, including the central Solihull library, for a trial period of 6 months from January 2020. Councillor Eames and Borough Councillor Hawkins put together objections which Borough Councillor Richard Holt presented very strongly to the SMBC Committee. The proposal has now been deferred until April 2020, though the Parish Council believe that this proposal would have gone through but for the objections from the Parish Council and Borough Councillors Hawkins and Holt - and so the Library hours have been safeguarded for the moment. Councillor Trevor Eames said that Dickens Heath had a very strong case given the recent co-location of the Parish Council to the Library, along with the lack of consultation with the Parish Council - even though there is supposed to be a partnership with SMBC which involves trying to extend the hours that the Library is open to the public. Our Ward Councillors managed to convince the SMBC Committee to withdraw the proposals for all of the libraries for the time being. Chair Maureen Holloway added that the Parish Council had a meeting arranged with a representative of Knowle Library Volunteers to look into extending the Library opening hours with the help of volunteers - and certainly didn't expect this to be shoring up the current opening hours. Dickens Heath's library is a very expensive public asset and it doesn't make sense for it to only be open to the public for 14 hours per week. The Parish Council are very disappointed with SMBC's attempt to cut the opening hours and are determined to work towards the building being made available to the community as much as possible.

Minute 101 (2019/20) Library Volunteers

A very useful meeting was held with a representative of the Knowle Library Volunteers - to find out how volunteers enabled Knowle Library to open on Saturday afternoons. This scheme to be looked at in the New Year for Dickens Heath Library

Minute 102 (2019/20) Library Lease for Co-occupation

Negotiations on the Library lease for co-occupation are drawing to a close, and the Parish Council just need to decide on whether or not to request permission for internal alterations as part of the lease discussions. Given SMBC's proposal to reduce the opening hours at the Library, the Parish Council will have to give careful consideration before investing Parish Council funds into the Library. Councillor Trevor Eames said that a landlord cannot reasonably refuse internal alterations. Therefore a majority of Parish Councillors decided that the negotiations on the lease should be concluded without including details about any future internal alterations.

Minute 103 (2019/20) Community/Youth Facility at the School

Members of the Parish Council were invited to have a tour of the new community facility at the School earlier today. It is currently an empty shell, with the fitting out still to be done, but it looks a great facility. It should be up and running in the New Year and the Scouts are due to use the facility as soon as it is ready.

Minute 104 (2019/20) Village Green and Playground

The next meeting with the Liquidators, Savills and SMBC is due to take place in November 2019. The Parish Council is still awaiting the transfer of the land to SMBC, and subsequent lease to the Parish Council.

Minute 105 (2019/20) Village Traffic Islands

The island on Dickens Heath Rd, near to Fishers Drive, has made a list of best islands due to its shape. Ironically the photo used is one of the island before it was improved a few years ago.

The island at Brixfield Way needs clearing and replanting – Councillor Mike Small to follow this up.

Minute 106 (2019/20) Remembrance Sunday Service 2019

Rev Theresa Jones will be leading the service, with Rev Mark Fisher assisting. The Scouts will be participating in the service, Central Fast Response have confirmed that they will be attending to provide First Aid, and the Police have been invited. The order of service, leaflet and poster is being completed – it was agreed that the Clerk should get these printed professionally.

Members of the Church would like to offer refreshments using the Library kitchen, as the Village Hall is booked on Sunday mornings – the Clerk to follow this up with the Library manager.

Minute 107 (2019/20) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Wright, seconded by Councillor Potter, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the October 8th 2019 Agenda be approved – 17 payments totalling £3,538.05 including an additional payment of £300.00 to EmmsIT Ltd for website support and backups for 2019/20.

Report on Finances for the Year to Date

This was received, there is currently a surplus of £144,000 and a projected end of year surplus of almost £106,000.

Bank Mandate

This has now been authorised by HSBC and should soon be updated.

Minute 108 (2019/20) Updated Policies and ProceduresPetitions Policy

This was approved.

Disciplinary, Grievance and Complaints Policies

Deferred.

Minute 109 (2019/20) Website

Councillor Alan Scholes has updated the In Bloom page. SMBC will be providing around 1500 bulbs which will need planting out in the next 5 to 6 weeks. A plea needs to go out for volunteers to help with this.

Minute 110 (2019/20) Community Use of Library First Floor

A bookings policy is to be drawn up and then the Library will need to advertise when it is not being used so that the community can potentially use the space.

Minute 111 (2019/20) Grant Applications

The Library manager has asked if the Parish Council would fund craft materials for children's activities, in order to encourage children to visit the library. The Parish Council agreed a grant of £100.

Minute 112 (2019/20) Away Day

Issues discussed at the Parish Council Away Day included:

- In Bloom Garden Committee – to involve Parish Councillors, Dickens Heath Allotments and In Bloom Best Garden winners. Individual roads in Dickens Heath may wish to also enter In Bloom, one road has already shown an interest – this to be publicized.
- Planting of Additional Trees – Councillor Mike Small to speak to Chris Barr at SMBC about possible locations. A real Christmas tree on the Village Green to be looked into for future years.
- Neighbourhood Development Plan – to be discussed further in the New Year.
- Additional Facilities on Village Green

Minute 113 (2019/20) Correspondence

Overgrown Vegetation along Dickens Heath Rd

Vegetation is very overgrown along Dickens Heath Rd by Birchy Leasowes Lane – the SMBC Neighbourhood Co-ordinator to follow this up.

Bromsgrove District Plan Review Update and Call for Sites Consultation

Bromsgrove DC is calling for landowners to propose sites for additional housing – some of which are likely to fall on the Solihull border.

Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 – Transport Strategy Announcement

Councillor Trevor Eames to report on anything relevant to Dickens Heath.

Minute 114 (2019/20) Items for Next Agenda

Disciplinary, Grievance and Complaints Policies.

Meeting ended 8.45pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday November 12th 2019: 7.15pm in the Library (1st floor)