

## The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

### Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday September 8th 2020

**Present:**

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

Shakespeare Line Promotion Group: Fraser Pithie, Sarah Oakley

3 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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**Minute 37 (2020/21) Apologies for Absence**

None.

**Minute 38 (2020/21) Public Participation**

Bin on Island at Brixfield Way

A resident raised concerns about the public bin on the island at Brixfield Way – it is rumoured that it is being used as a drugs drop. This has been going on for several months at least, and can it be removed? The Clerk to contact Solihull MBC.

**Minute 39 (2020/21) Whitlocks End Train Station Adoption**

The Chair welcomed Sarah Oakley and Fraser Pithie of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group. During lockdown, all stations on the Shakespeare Line have been adopted by the local community except for Whitlocks End. Adoption of a local station means that the community/Scouts Group etc. take care of the appearance of the station – for example with planters, noticeboards etc. The infrastructure remains the responsibility of the rail company. There are grants and funds available for each station, and Earlswood Garden Centre have agreed to provide materials for each station. The Councillors agreed that this sounded like a very positive project, and they would like to be involved. Tidbury Green PC have also shown enthusiasm, so it could be a joint project. The Clerk to contact TGPC, and Councillor Mike Small to contact Dickens Heath Scouts and a local environment community group.

Fraser added that being involved with the adoption of Whitlocks End would have the benefit of engagement with the train operator, and therefore an opportunity to engage over issues such as any car park extension, and safety of pedestrian access and footpaths.

**Minute 40 (2020/21) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

None.

**Minute 41 (2020/21) Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Tuesday July 14th 2020**

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

**Minute 42 (2020/21) Venue for and Times of Future Meetings**

It was agreed that, as of the October 2020 meeting, the Parish Council would revert to evening meetings on Zoom with the aim of returning to meetings in the Library as soon as possible. The PC are waiting for notification from SMBC of the number of people that it is currently safe to allow in the Library at any one time.

*Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020*

Signature.....

Date.....

**Minute 43 (2020/21) Actions from the Previous Meeting**Library

The Clerk is meeting with Kate Bunting of SMBC to discuss plans for potentially reopening the Library.

Photos for New Website

Some great photos have been received in response to the appeal for photos for the new website's homepage. It was agreed that Councillors Mike Small and Di Potter would have a look at all the photos and choose 5 or 6 that best represent Dickens Heath, and that a £25 voucher would be awarded to each chosen photographer.

Change of Postcode Addresses Query

A resident has asked whether the PC can look into asking the Royal Mail to update their postcode address file so that addresses in the village come under Dickens Heath rather than Shirley as they do now. Cheswick Green PC went through this process a few years ago, and their Clerk has forwarded a lot of information. Changes can only be made for one of 2 reasons – either to improve the Royal Mail's service, or to reflect customer demand. The second of these reasons would be applicable in this case, and would involve asking every household in Dickens Heath if they would support the change, and arranging for responses to be collected and analysed - it involves a huge amount of work. It was agreed that the PC doesn't currently have the resources to take this forward at the moment.

Junction of Rumbush Lane/Copperfield Court

Having refreshed the lines at this junction, SMBC have now agreed to install a Give Way sign.

**Minute 44 (2020/21) Planning Applications**

Councillor Trevor Eames outlined concerns that he has about 2 of the planning applications:

21 Short St - his view is that the proposed garage conversion, rear diner/conservatory and summer house/office is over-intensive, taking out most of the remaining garden. He suggested that the PC requests careful assessment by the planners.

30 Whitchurch Lane - he also has concerns about the plans to convert the double garage into a dog grooming parlour, with respect to noise and lack of parking. He suggested that the PC request that there should be a condition regarding noise, the number of dogs in the grooming parlour at any one time, and that the application should be personal to the applicant and not to the property.

It was agreed that these comments should be forwarded to Solihull MBC.  
No comments on the other planning applications.

**Minute 45 (2020/21) Update on the Solihull Local Plan**

Councillor Trevor Eames reported that an update on the Solihull Local Plan was due to be considered at SMBC Cabinet this week, and this would have indicated the sites under consideration. However, this has now been deferred until October.

**Minute 46 (2020/21) SMBC Issues**

Solihull MBC were in Dickens Heath last week, tidying up areas around the village. A resident has reported that part of the pathway on Primrose Lane has again been missed – with overgrown vegetation and masses of slippery leaves. The Clerk to contact SMBC and request it is added to the winter schedule.

**Minute 47 (2020/21) Village Green and Playground**

In November, SMBC are due to plant 3 trees on the Village Green to replace those that have died. It was agreed that the PC's contractor for the Village Green, Fairways, should be asked to quote for removing the dead trees.

Residents have raised concerns about the bollards around the Village Green, that some are loose and need fixing. It was agreed that Fairways should also be asked to check these.

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Signature.....

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There have also been reports of some disorderly behaviour in the playground, and Dickens Heath Management Co. have asked whether the PC has anything in place to deal with this. It was agreed that it is an unsupervised playground, and the PC has a system in place to make sure that it is safe. But the PC can't police it. If residents are concerned that the law is being broken, then they need to ring 101. It is a playground for children under 12 years of age, and Councillor Nargis Rashid suggested that the PC could put up a notice to remind residents of this. It was agreed that a notice should be considered as part of the new playground procurement.

#### **Minute 48 (2020/21) Procurement of a Replacement Playground**

A letter inviting an expression of interest to tender has been sent to 3 companies on the ESPO list of approved contractors. Councillors Nargis Rashid and Doreen Wright, along with the Clerk, will meet with representatives of those contractors that express an interest – to gather ideas of different options for play equipment. These can then be used in a consultation with the school children and parents. Councillor Rashid reported that the children at the school are ready to have an input.

#### **Minute 49 (2020/21) Trees & Improvement of the Environment**

A number of residents have set up a new Environmental Group for the village. Councillor Mike Small is meeting with representatives of this group along with Shameena Villars of SMBC in mid September. Chair Maureen Holloway added that the land in front of Copperfield Court really needs some tidying up.

#### **Minute 50 (2020/21) Remembrance Sunday**

There has been no correspondence from Solihull MBC about the usual road closures on Remembrance Sunday due to the ongoing pandemic. The Councillors agreed that the occasion still needed to be marked, in a less formal way that ensures everyone's safety. The Clerk to order the usual wreaths from the Royal British Legion which a deputation of Councillors can lay on the memorial, having observed the silence.

#### **Minute 51 (2020/21) Village Hall**

The Village Hall is not reopening just yet, as some maintenance work is being done.

#### **Minute 52 (2020/21) Hanging Baskets**

There have been additional hanging baskets this year with a total of 74 lamp posts, plus clock island, adorned with hanging baskets or floral boxes. The Councillors agreed that some locations did seem to have a large number of hanging baskets, and that the numbers could probably be reduced for next year. The Clerk to look at the numbers and locations. A brighter mix of colours for next year was also agreed – with more yellow and white flowers.

#### **Minute 53 (2020/21) Solar Christmas Trees**

The quote from Plantscape for 28 solar lamp post trees was agreed, the Clerk to order them.

#### **Minute 54 (2020/21) Lamp Posts**

Councillor Doreen Wright confirmed that the new lamp posts on both Dickens Heath Rd and Rumbush Lane are now working.

#### **Minute 55 (2020/21) Financial Matters**

Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Rashid, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the September 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 Agenda be approved – 19 payments totalling £4,791.60 for August 2020 and 16 payments totalling £8,032.38 for September 2020.

Report on Finances for the Year to Date

SMBC under-invoiced for the Library rent during 2019/20, and have apologised for a large balancing figure invoice of £4,533.65. On the plus side, they have agreed not to invoice for the first 6 months of 2020/21 due to the lockdown restrictions.

There is currently a surplus of £112,000 with an end of year projected surplus of £117,000. This figure includes the playground procurement reserve.

Staff Pay Award

The National Joint Council for local government services has agreed a pay increase of 2.75%, applicable from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020. It was agreed that Parish Council staff should receive this pay award.

Councillors' Allowances

Parish Councillors' allowances are based on a percentage of those paid to Solihull Borough Councillors. SMBC have agreed increases to their allowances of 5.5% from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 and a further 2.56% from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021. It was agreed that the Parish Councillors' allowances should be uplifted in line with those of Solihull Borough Councillors.

Admin. Assistant Change in Hours

Hannah, the admin assistant to the Council, will probably be reducing her hours to 4 per month.

**Minute 56 (2020/21) Racial Awareness/Unconscious Bias Training**

Councillor Nargis Rashid is attending a webinar in early October and would like to feed back at the October PC meeting about options for training.

**Minute 57 (2020/21) Equality & Diversity Policy**

Councillors Trevor Eames and Nargis Rashid, along with the Clerk, to look at producing a draft policy to bring to the October PC meeting.

**Minute 58 (2020/21) Parish Council Website**

The website has moved over to a template which meets accessibility requirements, and a Website Accessibility Statement is required before the end of September. The Clerk has drafted one but doesn't have the detailed knowledge to complete it by testing the website. It was agreed that the Clerk should ask Mark Emms, who hosts the website, to complete this.

**Minute 59 (2020/21) Correspondence**Dickens Heath Scouts

The Scouts are looking to do more outdoor activities – they have asked if they can borrow the litter picking equipment, and whether there is anything else they can do to help? The Parish Councillors felt that it would be fine for the Scouts to borrow the litter picking equipment, and wondered whether the Scouts would be interested in being involved in the adoption of Whitlocks End train station.

Improvements Required in Village

A resident has asked if the PC can help by chasing up improvements required – eg. the missing bollard opposite the Library, the damaged Main St sign opposite the Library, the broken barriers on Dickens Heath Rd between the clock and Miller and Carter, and the blocked drains in Tibblestone. The Clerk to report these again to SMBC.

A second resident has also asked about Ascote Lane, where some of the wooden rails need fixing, as does the Library sign. The Clerk to contact SMBC.

WALC Website

WALC are now offering access to the members area of their website to Councillors. The Clerk to set up logins for Councillors Trevor Eames, Maureen Holloway and Nargis Rashid.

Parking in Short St

A resident has reported that the problem pavement parking has returned to Short St. This has been reported to SMBC Parking Services. He also asked whether the double yellow lines adjacent to Cornwood House could be removed as this seems to be where the drivers live. The Parish Councillors agreed that SMBC have made it quite clear that they will not make any changes to the double yellow lines in Dickens Heath at the moment.

Community Champions

SMBC wish to appoint a network of Community Champions to continue to support residents through the ongoing pandemic. The Clerk and Cathy of the Library have continued to assist by disseminating information where possible.

Feedback from Resident

A resident has commented that it is good to see Simon, our litter picker, out and about – the village is looking well kept. But she did also comment that the signage around the village is very confusing and badly positioned – better signs are needed to prevent motorists driving round and round. The Clerk to feed this back to SMBC.

**Meeting ended 1.40pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday October 13<sup>th</sup> 2020**