

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday October 13th 2020

Present:

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

Borough Councillor: Ken Hawkins

4 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 60 (2020/21) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 61 (2020/21) Public Participation

Bin on Island at Brixfield Way

A resident thanked the Parish Council for raising concerns about this bin with Solihull MBC – it has now been removed. The Parish Council’s request has been successful where residents’ had not been. The Chair did add that the PC has had a complaint about the removal of the bin – which the resident can understand, but the use of the bin as a drugs drop was of significant concern.

Parking Problems by Dickens Heath School

At school drop off and pick up times, problems with parking cause significant issues with access to Tythe Barn Lane (the dead end part). A resident said that a brick lorry got stuck for 3 hours the previous week when a car was parked at the entrance to the lane, and he asked whether parking restrictions could be put in place to cover those problematic times of the day. Chair Maureen Holloway asked Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins for his view as Cabinet Member for Highways. Councillor Hawkins said that Dickens Heath School is on the list to be considered for the ‘School Streets’ programme – but this has not yet been taken further because of concern about displaced vehicles. He will raise the issue with SMBC officers and ask them to investigate what might be done. The resident commented that there is safer parking on the other side of the dead end, if parents could be encouraged to park there and walk a little bit further.

Minute 62 (2020/21) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 63 (2020/21) Report from Borough Councillors

Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins gave an update on the Solihull Local Plan Review – he still has concerns over the viability of the Dickens Heath site at the sports grounds, as the developer is likely to ask for more houses. The SLP Review to be further discussed later on the agenda.

Councillor Hawkins also added that Tesco have been brilliant over their support of the food collections.

Minute 64 (2020/21) Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Tuesday September 8th 2020

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

Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Tuesday 13th October 2020

Signature.....

Date.....

Minute 65 (2020/21) Actions from the Previous MeetingProblem Parking on Short St

This has been referred to SMBC Parking Services. SMBC have responded to residents' petitions in some cases and have reviewed parking restrictions – it was agreed that it could be worth residents of Short St considering this.

Library Sign

This is due to be replaced in the next 3 months.

Halloween 2020

Halloween in the village was quiet last year, but it was agreed that it was still worth contacting the Police to ask them to keep an eye on the area.

Minute 66 (2020/21) Planning Applications

There was one planning application for tree works at 221 Dickens Heath Rd – no comments.

Councillor Trevor Eames added that a response had been sent in for a planning application, the deadline for which fell before this meeting. This was for work to an oak tree at 12 Brockhurst Lane. He advised that the crown thin of 20% may be excessive and a request has been made that the SMBC Tree Officer look at it carefully.

Minute 67 (2020/21) New SMBC Reporting System for Village Issues

Village issues can no longer be reported to Neighbourhood Co-ordinator Matt Gardner, and are now reported via a general SMBC email address. Although issues reported are acknowledged, there has been no feedback about whether they will be addressed or rectified (as far as we are aware only one issue has been dealt with). A report has now been set up to keep track of all issues that are reported to SMBC and when a response is received. Several parish councils are less than impressed with the new reporting system, Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright to raise these concerns at Solihull Area Committee later this month. Councillor Nargis Rashid added that SMBC should have a set number of days by which a response should be sent out.

Minute 68 (2020/21) Use of Library 1st Floor

Solihull MBC are planning to reopen the Library on Thursday mornings, and are currently doing a stocktake on Wednesdays. Tuesday has been designated as the Parish Council day for using the building, and SMBC would prefer the PC not to use the building when the librarians are there. Once the stocktake is complete, this should just mean that PC staff will need to avoid going in to work on a Thursday.

Minute 69 (2020/21) Village GreenTrees/Living Christmas Tree

Councillors Maureen Holloway and Trevor Eames have met with a representative of Fairways, the PC's contractor, regarding the digging out of the 3 dead trees on the Village Green – these are all horse chestnut trees and are diseased. SMBC are providing 3 'heavy' trees free of charge to replace them, plus another additional tree. All agreed the quote from Fairways to dig out the dead trees and collect and plant the replacement trees. Councillor Trevor Eames has contacted Woods Farm with regard to procuring a living Christmas Tree for planting on the Village Green. The Chair has also asked a local resident, who is an electrical engineer, to look at how a power supply could be run to the tree for Christmas lights, and there was some discussion about this.

Bollards

The bollards around the edge of the Village Green have also been looked at, and the only ones that are insecure are those that are removeable in order to allow access to the Green. There was some discussion about the gate on the Village Green, and whether it would be accessible enough for Festival on the Green's vehicles – but it was thought not. It was agreed that the removeable bollards should not be made more secure at the moment.

Possibility of Unauthorised Encampments

The Clerk raised the possibility of unauthorised encampments on the Village Green, and whether the PC should have bailiffs on standby. Councillor Trevor Eames said that, in his view, the Village Green is not particularly at risk – travellers don't tend to like sites that are overlooked. The 2 recent unauthorised encampments in the Parish have been on the highway and at a sports ground, not the Village Green. SMBC also have very effective procedures, and these 2 encampments were moved on within 24 hours. It was therefore agreed that there is not a raised risk at the moment.

Minute 70 (2020/21) Procurement of a Replacement Playground

Of the 3 companies invited to tender, one company has not responded and the other 2 have been out to look at the site and have forwarded some ideas. Fawns have provided 2 fully costed plans of playground equipment and flooring. Kompan have provided some ideas for replacement equipment within the budget, and Glasdon have separately forwarded ideas for children's benches and bins. It was agreed that additional information was required from Kompan regarding detailed costs of equipment, installation, and the constitution of the flooring. It was agreed that an informal meeting of Councillors was required to put the ideas together before they could be forwarded to the School for the children's views.

Minute 71 (2020/21) Remembrance Sunday

Due to the ongoing pandemic, there will unfortunately be no Remembrance Sunday Service this year. Parish Councillors will observe the silence and lay wreaths at the memorial.

Minute 72 (2020/21) Adoption of Whitlocks End Train Station

Tidbury Green PC are not able to be involved in this at the moment. The local Dickens Heath Environmental Group are keen to be involved, and Councillor Mike Small will get in touch with Dickens Heath Scouts to ask if they would be interested. The Clerk to follow the proposal up with the Community Rail Partnership Officer.

Minute 73 (2020/21) Solihull Local Plan Review Consultation

The definitive plan for the Solihull Local Plan Review Consultation is yet to be formally published. Councillor Trevor Eames proposed that a separate meeting should be held in November once all the information is available, the Clerk to publish an appeal for the views of residents.

Minute 74 (2020/21) Proposal to hold a Virtual Annual Parish Meeting

It was agreed that this should be deferred to the November meeting.

Minute 75 (2020/21) Outside Events attended by CouncillorsEquality & Diversity Webinar

Councillor Nargis Rashid attended an Equality & Diversity webinar, in which the presenter talked about racism and unconscious racial bias based on her own experiences. Councillor Rashid gave a general overview of the webinar which stressed the importance of having an Equality & Diversity policy, and of being aware of the diversity of our community. She added that the webinar has been recorded and can be accessed by the rest of the Parish Council, the Clerk to follow up on this.

Planning Webinar

Councillor Trevor Eames gave an update on this very useful webinar. The Government are looking at both short term and long term changes to speed up the planning process, which may affect Solihull if they don't get their Local Plan in place soon.

Solihull Community Champions

Councillors Maureen Holloway and Trevor Eames attended this virtual meeting which gave updates on the current Covid situation in Solihull, it was very interesting and involved Ruth

Tenant who is SMBC Director of Public Health. The updates will be held two-weekly from now on.

Minute 76 (2020/21) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Small, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the October 13th 2020 Agenda be approved – 23 payments totalling £6,380.37 for October 2020, including an additional payment of £447.00 to Fairways for maintenance of the Village Green for October.

Report on Finances for the Year to Date

There is currently a surplus of £147,000 with an end of year projected surplus of £115,000. This figure includes the playground procurement reserve.

Completion of External Audit

The external audit has now been completed, with no comments.

Minute 77 (2020/21) Equality & Diversity Policy

A revised Equality & Diversity Policy has been circulated – it was proposed by Councillor Maureen Holloway and seconded by Councillor Doreen Wright. Councillor Nargis Rashid agreed that it should be adopted, with the addition of some narrative to ensure that it is a 'living document'. Councillor Mike Small agreed with this, and added that the policy should be reviewed in 12 months' time once the Parish Council has undergone some training and found out more about the diversity of the community. Councillor Trevor Eames said that the policy includes provision for it to be reviewed as and when necessary. All agreed that the policy should be approved with a view to reviewing it once the training and information gathering has been completed.

Minute 78 (2020/21) Parish Council Website

The Website Accessibility Statement has been completed and was published on the website before the deadline.

Minute 79 (2020/21) Correspondence

Letter from Saquib Bhatti MP

Saquib Bhatti MP has written to the Parish Council thanking them for their work in the community, and requesting a virtual meeting. This to be arranged for early November.

Bin Opposite GP Surgery

The bin opposite the GP surgery has been knocked off its base – this has been reported to SMBC.

Village Hall Fire Assembly Point

A request has been received from the Village Hall Committee to ask whether the Village Hall can use the playground as their fire assembly point. This was agreed.

Noise Complaint

A resident has contacted the PC about neighbours and their very loud karaoke which carries on well after midnight, and continues despite requests to be quieter. Councillor Trevor Eames said that if the noise is excessive, then it can be reported to Environmental Health at SMBC who will put in equipment to measure the noise – but the threshold is quite high. Councillor Eames suggested a few options that the residents could consider – they could approach Dickens Heath Management Co., as the lease states that residents shouldn't cause a nuisance, if they are tenants they could approach their landlord, or they could go to their residents' association.

Minute 80 (2020/21) 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 81 (2020/21) Assistant Clerk Hours

The Assistant Clerk had reduced her hours of work, it was agreed that she could return to working her previous 6 hours per week.

Meeting ended 9.55pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday November 10th 2020