

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday January 12th 2021

Present:

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

2 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 100 (2020/21) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Councillor Alan Scholes.

Minute 101 (2020/21) Public Participation

No village issues raised.

Minute 102 (2020/21) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 103 (2020/21) Report from Borough Councillors

None present.

Minute 104 (2020/21) Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Tuesday November 10th 2020

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

Minute 105 (2020/21) Actions from the Previous Meeting

Solihull Local Plan Review Consultation

The Parish Council response has been submitted and published on the website – the response was fully supported by Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins.

PAT Testing of PC Electrical Equipment

Some PC items were missed off the library PAT testing last year. The PAT testing has now been done for the second year, with all PC equipment included – except for the laptop currently being used for working from home.

Adoption of Whitlocks End Train Station

There has been little response to the Parish Council's suggestion for a zoom meeting to discuss this. It was agreed that this should be deferred until after lockdown.

Minute 106 (2020/21) Planning Applications

There have been 3 planning applications over the Christmas period:

- 15 Brockhurst Lane - tree works - no comments.
- 7 Beech Lane - rear family room extension - no comments.
- 2 Old Grove Lane - 2 storey rear extension - this is a significant extension, but the plans have been amended to ensure that it complies, therefore no comments. Councillor Trevor Eames has notified management co. Ground Solutions.

Minute 107 (2020/21) Parish Council Offices in the Library

A meeting has been arranged with Kate Bunting of SMBC for members of the Parish Council to discuss accessibility to the Library, and suitable rent for quarters 3 and 4 of 2020/21.

Minute 108 (2020/21) SMBC Reporting System for Village Issues

Annie Masters of SMBC has responded to some of the Parish Council's queries:

- There is good news with the adoption by SMBC of the stretch of Rumbush Lane from No. 122 Rumbush Lane to the junction with Mereways, including the island at Gorcott Lane. The Parish Council can now look at making improvements to this island. SMBC are still working on the adoption of Rumbush Lane between the island at Brixfield Way and the island at Ascote Lane.
- The ditches along Birchy Leasowes Lane need clearing as they are a flood risk – the SMBC drainage team have already written to the landowner as it is their responsibility, SMBC will enforce if necessary.

Minute 109 (2020/21) Village GreenVillage Christmas Tree

This has now been removed.

Bollards

The bollard on the Village Green that has been removed is still to be reinstated, along with the bollard that was knocked out by a car being replaced by a post with signage.

Minute 110 (2020/21) Procurement of Replacement Playground

Councillor Nargis Rashid said that a template of play equipment choices has been produced ready for the children at the School to indicate their preferences. However, as schools are under such pressure during lockdown, this has been put on hold for the moment.

Minute 111 (2020/21) Traffic Islands

Members of the Parish Council will meet with Fairways to discuss improvements to the traffic islands once lockdown is over.

Minute 112 (2020/21) Plaque for Cherry Tree

A cherry 'Tree of Hope' donated by SMBC has been planted on the Village Green to commemorate community unity during the pandemic. It was agreed that a plaque should be ordered to recognise this. The Clerk to liaise with Councillor Trevor Eames.

Minute 113 (2020/21) Trees and Improvement of the Environment

Shameena at SMBC has offered to donate another 30 trees for planting in the Parish. Councillor Trevor Eames suggested that, as the trees that were removed in Meadowpleck Lane have not yet been replaced, 6 trees could be planted there. Councillor Maureen Holloway added that residents had suggested other locations as well.

Minute 114 (2020/21) Litter

A resident has complained about litter and unemptied bins over the Christmas period. Councillor Trevor Eames has today had a walk around the Village Green and surrounding area, and didn't feel that litter was a problem now. The Parish Council agreed that such complaints over the Christmas period and bank holidays were inappropriate. As well as contractor Fairways who empty the bins on the Village Green, and our litter picker Simon, a couple who live near the Village Green are helping out by litter picking each day, as is a young man who is volunteering as a litter picker as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. The Parish Councillors agreed that their input into the community is greatly appreciated.

Minute 115 (2020/21) Solar Christmas Trees/Village Christmas Tree

The solar lamp post Christmas trees worked with no problems this year, and seemed brighter and more twinkly than in previous years.

The Village Christmas tree and its lights unfortunately weren't so problem free, with 3 sets of lights being deliberately cut on 3 separate occasions – which we can only conclude is pure vandalism. Chair Maureen Holloway thanked Parish Councillors Trevor Eames and Alan Scholes, along with some very supportive residents, for putting up the tree and the lights, and their persistence in trying to beat the vandal and keep the tree lit over Christmas. She also said it was thanks to Woods Farm and their donation of very substantial lights that the third act of vandalism did not take out all of the lights on Christmas Eve. It was agreed that the Parish Council would need to think very carefully about how the tree could be lit for next Christmas.

The possibility of growing a living Christmas tree on the Village Green was also discussed. It would need to be a small tree when planted, around 6 ft, and maybe it could be a leylandii. Councillor Mike Small will liaise with Shameena at SMBC about whether one of the 30 trees could be a living Christmas tree.

Minute 116 (2020/21) Dickens Heath Medical Centre

The Parish Council has heard from residents who are concerned that Dickens Heath Medical Centre may be closing – prescriptions are coming from Grove Rd, which is the SHP administration centre, and face to face consultations are taking place at Monkspath. Older residents in particular are very concerned. Martyn Sargeant of SMBC Community Champions has contacted SHP to clarify the situation, but has not yet received a response. Councillor Trevor Eames agreed to follow this up at the next Community Champions meeting.

Minute 117 (2020/21) Outside Events attended by CouncillorsSolihull Community Champions Update re Covid-19

Councillors Maureen Holloway and Trevor Eames continue to attend these SMBC updates on Covid-19.

Responding to Planning Applications

Councillor Trevor Eames also attended this webinar, which was very useful

Getting Started on Twitter

The Assistant Clerk attended a webinar on getting started on Twitter – she felt that it would be a lot of work, and that it would be better to concentrate on the website and Facebook page for the moment.

Minute 118 (2020/21) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Holloway, seconded by Councillor Rashid, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the January 12th 2021 Agenda be approved – 17 payments totalling £3,906.87 for January 2021, including an additional payment of £78.00 to SLCC for places on a Wordpress webinar, and 21 payments totalling £8,773.12 for December 2020.

Budget and Precept for 2021/22

The Parish Council considered the draft budget for 2021/22. The number of houses included in the tax base is slightly lower for 2021/22 than for 2020/21. If the Parish Council is to keep the precept charge to residents the same as for 2020/21, then the budget will have a deficit. The draft budget shows a budget deficit of £8,189 for the year. All agreed, **Resolved**, that the precept charge to residents should be kept the same as for 2020/21 – which will give an overall precept for 2021/22 of £81,415. The Clerk to complete the forms for SMBC to this effect.

Covid-19 Grant

The Parish Council has received from SMBC a Covid-19 support grant of £5,891. SMBC allocated grants to all parish councils on the basis of population, but Dickens Heath PC has not actually lost any income as a result of the pandemic. There was some discussion as to how this grant might be used to support the community during the ongoing pandemic, and Councillor Nargis Rashid suggested that some residents may not be able to easily travel to receive their vaccinations. Councillors Maureen Holloway and Trevor Eames to follow this up with SMBC Community Champions. All Councillors to think about appropriate ways in which the funding could be used.

Renewal of Insurance

The Parish Council's 3 year deal with Zurich is coming to an end. The Clerk has the renewal quote from Zurich plus 3 alternative quotes from broker Came & Co. The Parish Council agreed to renew with Zurich on another 3 year deal.

Report on Finances for the Year to Date

There is currently a surplus of £131,000 with an end of year projected surplus of £118,000. This figure includes the playground procurement reserve.

The Clerk to forward copies of bank statements and bank reconciliations to Councillor Di Potter for verification.

Minute 119(2020/21) Newsletter/Communication

Councillor Nargis Rashid would like to look at improving communication with residents, and suggested a survey to find out how best to do this. Councillor Mike Small agreed that there is a disconnect between what residents think the PC can do, and what it can actually do. Chair Maureen Holloway said that it is very easy now for residents to attend PC meetings using Zoom, but still very few attend. A member of the public suggested a Parish Councillor surgery on Zoom on a particular topic of concern – for example Dickens Heath Medical Centre. Councillor Trevor Eames replied that over time the Parish Council has tried a separate newsletter sent out with the Dickens Heath Directory, and a Saturday morning Councillor surgery in the Library (which only a handful of people attended). The resident added that highlighting a topic of concern and inviting people to come along to discuss it might have more success. Councillor Nargis Rashid suggested asking WALC if they offer any webinars on community engagement – the Clerk to follow this up.

Minute 120 (2020/21) Proposal to hold an Annual Parish Meeting

It was agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting should be held in March using Zoom. It was also agreed that Solihull Healthcare Partnership and Dickens Heath Medical Centre would be a good topic for discussion. Councillor Trevor Eames to contact Martyn Sargeant of SMBC Community Champions to ask whether he or a colleague would be able to attend.

Minute 121 (2020/21) CorrespondenceHanging Baskets Summer 2021

Plantscape have offered to freeze their prices from 2020 for 2021. It was agreed that the same number of hanging baskets should be ordered for this summer – which is enough for 74 lamp posts. It was also agreed to move a handful to alternative locations, and to ask for a bright mix of lighter colours.

WALC Course – Introduction to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

It was agreed that Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright, along with the Clerk, would attend this webinar in February 2021.

Minute 122 (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 123 (2020/21) Car Park Behind Tesco

This was discussed.

Minute 124 (2020/21) Village Hall

This was discussed.

Meeting ended 9.50pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday February 9th 2021