

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday February 9th 2021

Present:

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

3 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 125 (2020/21) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 126 (2020/21) Public Participation

Flooding on Village Roads

A resident informed the Parish Council that on lockdown walks he has regularly found flooded sections of Braggs Farm Lane, Cleobury Lane and Rumbush Lane to be impassable on foot. He has registered his concerns with Solihull MBC, and has a reference number for this. The Clerk to add this to the Parish Council's list of village issues, and to follow it up with Annie Masters of SMBC.

Exposed Cable Opposite the Tesco Loading Bay

A resident raised concern about a large exposed cable in the undergrowth on the land opposite the Tesco loading bay. He is confident that the cable is not live, but it does need to be dealt with. Annie Masters has already raised this query and SMBC are due to send out one of their electricians to have a look.

Minute 127 (2020/21) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

Councillor Maureen Holloway declared that she is a Director of the Village Hall and therefore took no part in the vote on whether the Parish Council should work in partnership with the Village Hall.

Minute 128 (2020/21) Report from Borough Councillors

None present.

Minute 129 (2020/21) Minutes of the previous Meeting held on Tuesday January 12th 2021

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

Minute 130 (2020/21) Actions from the Previous Meeting

Hanging Baskets 2021

These have been ordered for the summer.

Photos for Website

The website and Facebook page have now been updated with the winning photos sent in by residents, and the winning photographers have received prizes of vouchers.

Precept Notice 2021/22

This has been sent in to SMBC.

Bank Statements/Bank Reconciliation as at Dec 31st 2020

Councillor Di Potter confirmed that she has verified the bank reconciliation as at December 31st 2020 to the bank statements.

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Minute 131 (2020/21) Planning Applications

Two planning applications were considered:

4 Willowherb Way - tree works - no comments.

Betteridges Farm - erect 2 car garage adjacent to existing property - no comments.

Minute 132 (2020/21) Proposal to Work in Partnership with Dickens Heath Village Hall

The Parish Council has been approached by the Directors of the Village Hall with a view to the 2 organisations working more closely together, and this includes a proposal for the Parish Council office to move into the Village Hall. Representatives from both the Parish Council and the Village Hall have put forward proposals for a Heads of Terms document, and for progressing getting quotes for the installation of an office. Solihull MBC, as the landlord, will need to approve such internal alterations.

Chair Maureen Holloway asked the members of the Parish Council whether they were in favour of moving the Parish Council office into the Village Hall, and whether they were in favour of working with the Village Hall Directors to apply to SMBC for permission to install an office, Councillor Holloway taking no part in the vote. This was agreed, **Resolved**, all in favour.

Minute 132 (2020/21) Parish Council Offices in the Library

As a result of the pandemic and lockdown, and inability to use the site to its full potential, Kate Bunting of SMBC has offered to reduce the rent for the Parish Council's offices in the Library by 50% for Quarters 3 and 4 of 2020/21 to a total of £4,397.29. All agreed that this should be accepted.

Minute 133 (2020/21) Reporting of Village Issues to SMBC

The Parish Council had a very positive meeting with Annie Masters of SMBC this morning. One of the issues discussed was how to deal with the increased problem of dog mess. The Parish Council has tried various approaches over the years, it was agreed to trial putting posters up on lamp posts – Annie to see whether SMBC can provide any suitable posters.

Minute 134 (2020/21) Solihull Local Plan Review Update

Councillor Trevor Eames reported that Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins has posted a very useful update on this. Solihull MBC wish to get the plan adopted as soon as possible, this will be Summer 2021 at the earliest. The numbers of objections are much lower at this stage than in previous consultations. Councillor Hawkins refutes suggestions that the Plan has been rushed, given that the process began in 2016, and feels that this version of the Plan is as beneficial as it is likely to get.

Minute 135 (2020/21) Village GreenBenches

There are currently flooded patches underneath several of the benches on the Village Green, where the ground has worn away, making it difficult for people to sit on them. It was suggested that the Parish Council could look at setting the benches on slabs or tarmac to prevent this.

Litter Bins

As a result of the pandemic, people are outside a lot more and creating more litter – which means that the bins are filling up more quickly. This is likely to get worse as the weather improves. A large proportion of the litter consists of takeaway cups from Costa.

There are 4 litter bins on the Village Green, and a further one in the playground. The one in the playground will be addressed as part of the playground refurbishment. Of the 4 bins on the Village Green – 2 are very shabby. It was agreed that the PC should look at replacing these 4 bins with new larger ones – the Clerk to get a quote from Glasdon. It was also agreed that the Covid support grant could be used for these Village Green improvements that will benefit the whole community, and also that Costa and Tesco be approached to ask if they would be prepared to make a contribution.

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Minute 136 (2020/21) Procurement of Replacement Playground

On hold until the schools return.

Minute 137 (2020/21) Traffic Islands

Deferred until the Spring.

Minute 138 (2020/21) Trees and Improvement of the Environment

Councillor Mike Small gave an update – Shameena of SMBC has offered 30 whips. The Parish Council planted whips from the Woodland Trust last year, and unfortunately most of them did not survive. It is better to plant more substantial trees. SMBC have also offered to support us with a living Christmas tree. Councillor Maureen Holloway said that 6 substantial trees were really needed in Meadowpleck Lane to replace those removed – the SMBC Tree Officer is to look at which type of trees might successfully grow in that location. Councillor Small to feed this back to SMBC.

Minute 139 (2020/21) In Bloom 2021

In Bloom 2021 will be free of charge and there will be more emphasis on an extended portfolio than the usual visit by judges. Chair Maureen Holloway commented that in the past a lot of responsibility for preparing for In Bloom has fallen on Parish Councillors, and they are not in a position to do it all this year. Councillor Trevor Eames said that the usual hanging baskets have already been ordered, and the usual front garden competition could be run, which should generate enough input for a portfolio. Residents at Waterside are already looking after their planters, and they could be offered additional financial assistance. Councillors Di Potter and Doreen Wright offered to look after their respective nearest islands. Councillors Nargis Rashid and Di Potter offered to look after the planters at the school. Councillor Mike Small will get in touch with the Dickens Heath Environmental Group and Allotments. It was therefore agreed that there should be enough support and that In Bloom should be entered once again for 2021.

Minute 140 (2020/21) Dickens Heath Medical Centre

No update as yet.

Minute 141 (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. Saqib Bhatti MP attended last week and answered pre-submitted questions.

Solihull Area Committee (SAC)

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright attended this and Councillor Eames gave an update. The evening included presentations from Mark Andrews, the head of Planning, Design and Engagement at SMBC, and Martyn Sargeant of SMBC Community Champions. Councillor Eames added that it was interesting to learn at SAC that some parish councils are using their CIL monies to fund mobile speed signs.

Minute 142 (2020/21) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Small, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the February 9th 2021 Agenda be approved – 19 payments totalling £4,831.13 including an additional payment of £86.62 to BT for the phone & broadband.

Renewal of Annual Insurance 2021

The payment to Zurich to renew the insurance on another 3 year deal was approved, it was the lowest of 4 quotes obtained.

Report on Finances for the Year to Date

There is currently a surplus of £126,000 with an end of year projected surplus of £122,000. This figure includes the playground procurement reserve.

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Appointment of Internal Auditor

It was agreed that the Clerk should contact Bill Robinson to ask if he is willing to undertake the internal audit once again.

Minute 143 (2020/21) Parish Council Website

Some updates have been made to the website, and Assistant Clerk Hannah has added new photos to the home page. A resident has commented that the mobile version of the website is not as clear – this to be looked at.

Minute 144 (2020/21) Community Chest Grants

Community chest grants are for community activities, which cannot take place at the moment. It was agreed that the Community Chest should be reconsidered once lockdown is lifted.

Minute 145 (2020/21) Annual Parish Meeting on March 9th 2021

Martyn Sargeant of SMBC Community Champions has agreed to be guest speaker at the Annual Parish Meeting – he will do a short presentation plus a question and answer session. It was agreed that this should start at 6.30pm, and be followed by the usual Chair’s report and opportunity for residents’ questions. The March PC meeting will then follow at 7.30pm.

Minute 146 (2020/21) Correspondence

Licence Application for 118 Main St

Councillor Trevor Eames has advised that there are no valid grounds to object to this licence application for the sale of alcohol at 118 Main St, which was the dry cleaners.

Additional Grant Funding from SMBC

The Government has provided some funding to compensate for the cost of Local Council Tax Support, which has affected the tax base in Dickens Heath. SMBC have set aside £795 as a one off grant for Dickens Heath.

Minute 147 (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 148 (2020/21) Car Park Behind Tesco

This was discussed.

Meeting ended 9.05pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday March 9th 2021