

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Virtual Annual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday May 4th 2021

Present:

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

3 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 1 (2021/22) Election of Chair

Councillor Maureen Holloway proposed that Councillor Trevor Eames be elected as Chair. There were no other nominations, and all agreed that Councillor Eames be elected Chair. Councillor Eames accepted the position, and thanked Councillor Holloway for her 5 years as Chair to which she has dedicated a lot of time. Councillor Eames said that he appreciated all that she has done and he will try to continue the good work. Councillor Nargis Rashid reiterated the Council's appreciation for Councillor Holloway's hard work as Chair.

Minute 2 (2021/22) To Receive the Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

This to be signed before the next meeting.

Minute 3 (2021/22) Apologies for Absence

None. Councillor Nargis Rashid advised that she will have to leave the meeting before the end.

Minute 4 (2021/22) Public Participation

Trip Rails on Dickens Heath Road

A resident raised the issue of the trip rails on Dickens Heath Rd between the Clock and Miller and Carter. These were due to be repaired by SMBC at the end of March. The Clerk to chase this up with SMBC.

Virtual Parish Council Meetings

A resident asked whether the Parish Council meetings on Zoom were still coming to an end. Councillor Trevor Eames replied that legislation had allowed virtual parish council meetings until May 7th, and the Government had not made time in Parliament to extend this. For this reason, the May PC meeting is being held early, and the June meeting has been pushed back to the 22nd and will be in person in the Library.

Dickens Manor

A resident of Beech Lane gave an update on 2 oak trees, that have TPOs, but unfortunately have died. The trees are on private land, and so Bellway will approach the landowner with regards to safely removing the trees. The streetlights on Dickens Manor have also now had the necessary remedial work done and been handed over to SMBC.

SHP Patient Participation Group

A resident provided the contact details of this group for publication.

Minute 5 (2021/22) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

Councillor Maureen Holloway declared an interest during the agenda item on the planning application for 4 Packmores, as she is a close neighbour, and therefore took no part in the discussion.

Minute 6 (2021/22) Report from the Borough Councillors

None present.

Minute 7 (2021/22) To Decide Whether to Elect a Vice Chair

It was agreed that a Vice Chair should be elected. Councillor Alan Scholes nominated Councillor Maureen Holloway, seconded by Councillor Doreen Wright. No other nominations. All agreed that Councillor Maureen Holloway be elected as Vice Chair.

Minute 8 (2021/22) To Agree Dates of Council Meetings for the Year

The proposed schedule was agreed. Meetings will be held at 7.15pm in Dickens Heath Library on the second Tuesday of each month, and there will be no set meetings in August or December.

Minute 9 (2021/22) To Resolve Whether to Establish any Committees

It was agreed that there was no need for any formal committees.

Minute 10 (2021/22) To Appoint Representatives to Sit on Outside Bodies

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright will continue to attend SAC (Solihull Area Committee).

The WALC Chairs' update will be attended by the Chair or Vice Chair.

Minute 11 (2021/22) To Agree Bank Account Signatories

All Councillors to continue to be signatories for the bank account, plus the Clerk for administration purposes only.

Minute 12 (2021/22) To Agree to Review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

These were last reviewed in September 2019. It was agreed that they should be reviewed in September/October 2021.

Minute 13 (2021/22) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday March 9th 2021

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

Minute 14 (2021/22) Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday March 9th 2021

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

Minute 15 (2021/22) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meetingInternal Audit

This was completed on April 27th 2021.

Hanging Baskets

A request for more yellow/white/brighter flowers in the hanging baskets has been forwarded to Plantscape.

Minute 16 (2021/22) Planning Applications

2021/00939 - 4 Willowherb Way - Fell an oak tree & replace with silver birch tree.

Councillor Trevor Eames advised that this proposal to fell the oak tree could be left with the SMBC Tree Officer. Councillor Doreen Wright said that she did not agree with the tree being replaced with a silver birch, and it should be an oak. It was agreed that a response should be submitted requesting a substantial oak tree as a replacement.

No comments on the other planning applications.

Minute 17 (2021/22) Improvements to the Village Green

Bins and Benches

A number of improvements to the Village Green are being considered – including upgrading of bins and benches. At the end of March, the Clerk submitted a grant application to WALC for improvements to the bins and benches, and a grant of £4,000 has been received. Councillor Maureen Holloway suggested that some picnic benches close to the Village Hall could also be considered. Some quotes to be obtained for the June PC meeting.

Frequency of Emptying of Bins

Following a meeting with a local resident who volunteers as a litter picker in conjunction with Love Solihull, the Parish Councillors agreed to increase the bin emptying and litter picking on the Village Green to twice a week from now until September, as was done last year to cope with increased useage.

Trees

A number of dead horse chestnut trees have already been removed and replaced with alternative specimens. All of the trees on the Village Green will need to be inspected every 3 years as part of a regular programme – our Village Green contractor Fairways do this for Hockley Heath PC. It was agreed that the inspection should be done this Summer - the Clerk to ask Fairways for a quote.

Minute 18 (2021/22) Procurement of Replacement Playground

The Parish Council has received the results of the consultation with the school children, and this has been shared with parents who agreed to be part of the consultation. There was just one comment questioning the choices made by the children, and this was regarding the basket swing. The children have opted for one large basket swing to replace the 2 junior swings currently in the playground, but one of the parents noted that there are often queues for the 2 current swings. This was discussed by the Parish Councillors - they agreed that the 2 current swings are extremely popular, and as the space for the playground is limited it would be better to retain 2 swings rather than one larger swing. Councillor Nargis Rashid offered to explain this to the children at the school when they are given an update, and that all of their other choices will be taken on board. The next step will be for a smaller working group to meet to draw up the formal specification for the playground before it goes to tender.

Councillor Nargis Rashid gave her apologies and left the meeting.

Minute 19 (2021/22) Reporting of Village Issues to Solihull MBC

Annie Masters, the Parish Council's contact at Solihull MBC, has been very helpful – but their department is undergoing yet another reorganisation, and Annie does not know where she will be working after the elections on Thursday. The Clerk to follow up on this.

Minute 20 (2021/22) In Bloom/Trees

Two residents of Waterside have offered to plant out the planters at Waterside and the flower boxes on the island at Waterside, and they have asked whether the Parish Council can make a financial contribution towards the plants. It was suggested that the planters and flower boxes need some bedding plants which will add colour, and perhaps SMBC will provide some bulbs for planting in the Autumn. It was agreed that £75 for each resident should be sufficient to purchase the bedding plants required – the Clerk to arrange payment.

Councillor Mike Small reported that Shameena of SMBC has offered the Parish Council some further small trees for planting. The whips planted last year on the Village Green didn't do well, they were too small. It was agreed that no further trees are needed on the Village Green, and that larger trees are preferred to whips for any other locations.

Minute 21 (2021/22) Request for Improved Lighting on Buckridge Lane & on the Village Green/Playground

A request has been received for the Parish Council to consider improving the lighting on Buckridge Lane and on the Village Green/Playground. As Buckridge Lane is the responsibility of Solihull MBC, it was agreed that this request should be forwarded to SMBC. The Parish

Councillors then discussed the lighting on the Village Green. Councillor Trevor Eames said that as the playground is for younger children, its use after dark shouldn't be encouraged – this might lead to vandalism and antisocial behaviour. All agreed that additional lighting for the playground was not appropriate.

Minute 22 (2021/22) Reports from Councillors who have attended Outside Groups or Events

WALC Chairs' Meetings

Councillor Maureen Holloway has been attending these updates which are very interesting and informative. The recent one focussed on the illegality of virtual meetings after May 6th 2021.

Solihull Area Committee (SAC)

Councillors Trevor Eames and Doreen Wright attended the recent SAC meeting where Paul Tovey of SMBC Highways and Stephen Wilkinson of SMBC Planning Enforcement gave presentations. Councillor Eames raised the issue of the electrical charging points installed in Dickens Heath outside Cornwood House, which have been located in the middle of the pavement and in front of an apartment lounge window. Government policy is that such installations are 'unregulated' and therefore consultations are not required, and there will be more of them in the future. Councillor Eames also raised the issue of failures to comply with planning conditions in locations that remain unadopted, for example the inadequate green screening of the water pumping station/electricity sub station on Bellway's Dickens Manor estate. Adoption can take a very long time – with planning conditions not being enforced, and SMBC unwilling to adopt until the conditions are met. It is a chicken and egg situation. Councillor Eames confirmed that the SMBC officers have added this issue on Dickens Manor to their list to look into.

Minute 23 (2021/22) Financial Matters

1. Proposed by Councillor Holloway, seconded by Councillor Potter, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the May 4th 2021 Agenda be approved – 16 payments totalling £4,119.18 for May (this included additional payments of £97.06 to BT for the phone/broadband and £181.50 to Bill Robinson for the internal audit), 18 payments totalling £4,885.88 for April and one End of Year 2020/21 payment for £709.11.
2. New Payroll System
DM Payroll Services has moved to a new payroll system which is able to email out payslips.
3. Report on the Finances of the Council
The first instalment of the precept has been received from SMBC, and there is currently a very healthy surplus of £154,000.
4. Risk Assessment and Management Document 2021/22
This was received and approved.
5. Internal Audit for 2020/21
This went well, the internal auditor signed the Internal Audit Report on the AGAR, and the full report will go to the June 2021 meeting.

End of Year Accounts 2020/21

Proposed by Councillor Holloway, seconded by Councillor Small, **Resolved** that the End of Year Accounts for 2020/21 be approved. These have been verified to the bank statements, which were included in the papers circulated to Councillors for the meeting.

Minute 24 (2021/22) Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020/21

1. The Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 was approved, and will be signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO in the next few days.
2. The Annual Accounting Statements 2020/21 were approved, and will be signed by the Chair and Clerk/RFO in the next few days.

Minute 25 (2021/22) Policy for Use of the Village Green

This was approved subject to one minor amendment.

Minute 26 (2021/22) CorrespondenceDickens Heath Scouts

Dickens Heath Scouts have asked for permission to use the Village Green for Scouting activities – agreed subject to the Use of the Village Green Policy.

Illegal Parking in Dickens Heath

A resident has raised concerns about illegal parking in the village, and this was followed up with Parking Services at SMBC. Parking Services have responded that, since January 1st 2021, officers have visited Dickens Heath 379 times, spent 53 hours and 13 minutes in the village and issued 23 parking tickets.

National Code of Conduct

The Local Government Association have proposed a new National Code of Conduct, which NALC have agreed to adopt. SMBC have adopted it as of May 2021. It was agreed that this should be added to the June agenda.

Electrical Charging Points

A resident has complained about the inappropriate location of the electrical charging points recently installed by SMBC, in the middle of the pavement and directly outside an apartment's large lounge window. SMBC have responded to the resident and are looking at replacement with a shorter unit, but not relocation. Councillor Trevor Eames raised this with Paul Tovey of SMBC Highways at Solihull Area Committee, and Borough Councillor Richard Holt has also raised it with SMBC officers.

Bins at Waterside

A resident has contacted the Parish Council about the 2 bins at Waterside – they are inadequate, falling apart and are heavily used by walkers. Waterside residents are approaching Dickens Heath Management Co. to ask for new larger bins, but if they say no – would the Parish Council consider awarding a grant for the cost of the bins? The Parish Councillors agreed that they were not able to pay for street furniture on private land.

Foul Water Pumping Station/Electricity Sub Station on Dickens Manor

A resident has complained about the inadequate green screening, compared to the planning proposal, of the foul water pumping station/electricity sub station on Bellway's Dickens Manor estate. This has been forwarded to Enforcement at SMBC who have raised it with the team dealing with the adoption, Councillor Eames also raised it with the SMBC Planning Enforcement officer at the SAC meeting.

Replacement Trees for Meadowpleck Lane

A resident has asked that the PC chase up the replacement trees for the verge on Meadowpleck Lane. The SMBC Tree Officer was contacted over 2 weeks ago, but has not replied as yet. The Parish Councillors agreed that this should also be referred to SMBC Enforcement.

WALC Advice on Changes to Accounting Processes

WALC have advised that local councils should put in place a General Reserve Policy, and to each year review the levels and purpose of earmarked and general reserves – it was agreed that this should be addressed as part of the budgeting process later in the year.

WALC also included advice on obtaining a gov.uk website domain – it was agreed that there was no need to change the current website domain.

How Does the PC Canvass Residents?

A resident has asked how the PC canvasses its residents on matters that are important to them, so as to inform their spending. The Parish Councillors agreed that they respond to complaints, suggestions and applications for grants from residents – for example the current procurement of a replacement playground and replacing the bins on the Village Green.

Minute 27 (2021/22) Items for next agenda

Internal Audit report, Code of Conduct.

Minute 28 (2021/22) 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 29 (2021/22) Car Park behind Tesco

This was discussed.

Minute 30 (2021/22) Village Hall

Councillor Maureen Holloway has resigned as a Director and Committee member of the Village Hall, Councillor Trevor Eames to be the Parish Council representative on the Village Hall Committee.

Minute 31 (2021/22) Staff Issues

Clerk Annual Leave

This was discussed.

Litter Picking Equipment

It was agreed that new litter picking equipment should be purchased for Simon.

Meeting ended 10pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday June 22nd 2021: 7.15pm in Dickens Heath Library