

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held in the Library on Tuesday June 22nd 2021

Present:

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

3 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 32 (2021/22) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Councillors Mike Small and Alan Scholes.

Minute 33 (2021/22) Public Participation

Double Yellow Lines

A resident suggested that additional double yellow lines are required on Rumbush Lane and Dickens Heath Rd, as parking causes continual traffic problems. Chair Trevor Eames replied that Solihull MBC have a process for requests like this, which is a points system to assess priorities within their annual budget. Requests are assessed against criteria, and then a schedule of works is produced for the year. The Parish Council has made several requests for additional double yellow lines, but SMBC have told us that Dickens Heath has had its 'fair share' for the next few years. In particular, after several incidents, requests have been made for double yellow lines on Dickens Heath Rd opposite the Village Green – but SMBC have responded that this will not be considered at the moment.

Minute 34 (2021/22) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 35 (2021/22) Report from the Borough Councillors

None present.

Minute 36 (2021/22) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday May 4th 2021

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

Minute 37 (2021/22) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting

Replacement Trees on Meadowpleck Lane

SMBC have confirmed that these trees will be replaced as part of their winter planting programme.

Dickens Heath Rd Trip Rails

The broken trip rails on Dickens Heath Rd from Miller and Carter are due to be repaired imminently – there has been a delay due to a lack of timber availability.

External Audit

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020/21, plus associated paperwork, has been submitted to the external auditor.

Minute 38 (2021/22) Planning Applications

An additional planning application for a single storey side extension at 2 Hutchings Lane was also considered.

No comments on any of the planning applications.

Minute 39 (2021/22) Improvements to the Village Green

Bins and Benches

Councillor Trevor Eames gave an update on the quote from Fairways, which is at a total cost of £10,990 plus VAT. All of the current benches will be removed, and recycled if possible. The replacement benches and 2 additional picnic tables will be made of long lasting, wipe dry, plastic with a life expectancy of 30 years. They will be fastened into the ground with concrete. And where items have been moved, the ground will be made good. Councillor Maureen Holloway added that one particular bench is being used by youths late at night, which is causing a disturbance to residents. She suggested that this bench should be moved. Councillor Eames confirmed that this bench will be relocated. The quote also includes the replacement of all bins with larger ones, and replacement of dog bins with more visible red ones. All approved these improvement works.

Minute 40 (2021/22) Procurement of Replacement Playground

The new ESPO contract documentation is now available, and is quite complex – this is currently being worked on.

Minute 41 (2021/22) Reporting of Village Issues to Solihull MBC

Annie Masters of SMBC has provided an update. There was some discussion about a resident's complaint regarding hedges and fences, backing on to Braggs Farm Lane in the Nature Reserve, that need cutting back and repair work. SMBC have asked for further information and photos.

Minute 42 (2021/22) In Bloom/Hanging Baskets

This year's hanging baskets have arrived, with a lovely bright colour scheme. Some of the hanging baskets will need relocating – as the new developments have been missed out once again.

Councillor Nargis Rashid has bought some plants for the planters at the school, and the school children will be planting them up.

It was agreed that the In Bloom Best Front Garden Competition should be run once again with the usual prizes.

Minute 43 (2021/22) Request from Cre8 to Use the Village Green for Fitness Activities

Cre8 have been using the Village Green for fitness activities for many years. Solihull MBC have owned the Village Green since February 2020 and the lease to the Parish Council does not allow commercial activity. Cre8's clients are local residents, and the Parish Council had agreed that Cre8 could use the Village Green during the Covid restrictions. It was agreed that the Parish Council does have to work to SMBC's rules of no commercial activity, and therefore Cre8 can use the Village Green until Covid restrictions are lifted, but it will not be allowed under normal circumstances.

Minute 44 (2021/22) Reports from Councillors who have attended Outside Groups or Events

WALC Chairs' Meetings

Councillor Trevor Eames attended the recent meeting – which discussed how to hold face to face meetings within the current Covid restrictions.

Minute 45 (2021/22) Financial Matters

Councillors Maureen Holloway and Doreen Wright objected to the payment of £75 to P Jewell for plants.

Proposed by Councillor Potter, seconded by Councillor Rashid, by 3 votes to 2 all of the payments in Appendix I of the June 22nd 2021 Agenda were approved – 21 payments totalling £4,386.61 including an additional payment of £74.49 to T Griffiths for plants.

Report on the Finances of the Council

There is currently a healthy surplus of £154,000. Copies of the latest bank statements have also been circulated to all Councillors to verify the bank reconciliation.

Internal Audit 2020/21

The internal audit report was received, which was very positive - there were a couple of recommendations to follow up on.

Minute 46 (2021/22) New National Code of Conduct

All agreed that this should be adopted.

Minute 47 (2021/22) CorrespondenceWeeds on Clock Island

A complaint had been received about the weeds on clock island – the Parish Council would like to thank the resident who has sorted this out.

SMBC Proposal for Static Cycling Activities

SMBC are working with a group who propose to run activities using static cycling machines, and are looking for a venue with sufficient storage space that could accommodate these. The Parish Council agreed that neither the Library nor the Village Hall would be suitable venues due to the lack of storage facilities – but the community hub at the school might be a possibility.

Community Chest Grants

A representative of the Dickens Heath School PTFA has asked whether Community Chest grants are available for this year. It was agreed that the Community Chest had been deferred due to Covid and would next be available in 2022.

Village Hall

The Village Hall Committee have offered to make the Village Hall available on a Thursday morning for the Retired Coffee Mornings – these were held on a Tuesday morning, but the Village Hall already has a booking on Tuesday mornings. It was agreed that Councillor Trevor Eames, as the Parish Council's representative on the Village Hall Committee, would follow this up.

Late Night Noise on the Village Green

A resident has complained about a noisy group of youths on the Village Green late at night – with loud music and shouting until 2am or so on several nights. It is not happening every night – Councillor Trevor Eames has been out on 4 occasions late at night and seen no sign of this. Dickens Heath Management Co. are also monitoring the situation. Enforcement of anti-social behaviour is a Police matter, the Parish Council or SMBC have no enforcement powers. The threshold for the Police to act is actually quite high, and it is unlikely that they will have the resources to address occasional episodes. The Police did visit the village on June 21st, and they have asked for detailed records to be maintained – which Dickens Heath Management Co. are doing.

Activities in the Library

The theatre at the Core has offered to hold some children's events in the Library over the Summer on Thursdays, and would like to use some of the upstairs space at the Library for this. Also SMBC would like to use the space to support students with job applications on Thursdays. Councillor Doreen Wright commented that, given all the lockdowns, this is a very positive thing to be doing. All agreed that this was fine.

Yoga Classes

A resident has asked whether it would be possible for a group of residents to hold a yoga class in the upstairs space at the Library – this was agreed subject to the usual risk assessments.

Minute 48 (2021/22) Items for next agenda

It was agreed that, as the Clerk is leaving, the July meeting should be brought forward to July 6th 2021. It was agreed that it should be a shortened meeting to cover essential routine issues.

Minute 49 (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 50 (2021/22) Car Park behind Tesco

For several months the Parish Council have been discussing the proposal of developer Elegant Dickens Heath Village Ltd to either transfer the 56 space car park behind Tesco to the Parish Council's ownership, or to send the land to the Crown. Elegant Dickens Heath Village Ltd will now be wound up on July 9th 2021, so a decision needs to be made.

Councillor Trevor Eames said that a letter of agreement to do the remedial works to the car park will be provided by the seller alongside the contract document. The Parish Council's solicitor is now in possession of the contract and is looking at it. There followed some debate about Dickens Heath Management Co's facilities on the car park land eg. the pumping station. Councillor Trevor Eames recommended that the Parish Council should vote in favour of signing the contract and taking ownership of the car park. This was approved by 3 votes to 2, with Councillors Trevor Eames, Nargis Rashid and Di Potter voting in favour, and Councillors Maureen Holloway and Doreen Wright voting against.

Minute 51 (2021/22) Resignation of Clerk

The Clerk has given notice to leave on July 11th 2021. She has offered to work on a temporary hours basis to cover essential duties over the Summer and to then facilitate a handover to the new post holder. This was agreed. WALC has forwarded some recruitment information to Chair Trevor Eames, and it was agreed that Councillors Trevor Eames and Nargis Rashid should look at this and make some recommendations to the Parish Council.

Meeting ended 9.45pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday July 6th 2021: 7.15pm in Dickens Heath Library