

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday April 5th 2022 at 7pm

Present:

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

Members of the Police team; Sergeant Adrian Mills, PC Paul Evans, PCSO Yvonne Dunn

D H Streetwatch; Charley Vedmore

26 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) – Update from Police Team & Streetwatch

Local Police Team

The Chair welcomed the Police Team to the meeting. Sergeant Adrian Mills introduced himself and his fellow officers PC Paul Evans and PCSO Yvonne Dunn. Sergeant Mills is new in post, he was based in Solihull, and has spent 5 to 6 years working in the City centre. PCSO Gary Jackson has moved on, and a new structure has been brought in as of today. Paul Evans is the senior PC and will have 3 officers working under him, with many of these being very keen trainees. In terms of ASB, the Police have only been able to offer very limited resources, and the approaching Commonwealth Games will take up a lot of manpower. Sergeant Mills said that he is pushing for additional Police officers on the Shirley Neighbourhood team, and he apologised that the team have let the village Streetwatch group down quite a bit. PCSO Dan Talbot will now be liaising with them, and Sergeant Mills confirmed that he will follow what they are doing. Dan and Paul will guide the Streetwatch group, and build them up so that they can rely on them. The Dickens Heath Management Co. security do monitor the village CCTV, and they do get in touch with the Police. Sergeant Mills agreed that he wants to push for a more robust response from the Police in dealing with ASB.

Speeding Cars on Cleobury Lane

A resident asked about problem speeding cars on Cleobury Lane. Sergeant Mills replied that residents need to call 101 so that the Police can log it. They can put orders on persistent offenders, and if they do it again the Police will take their car – this has been done in Birmingham city centre. He added that if residents can get registration numbers that is very helpful. Streetwatch added that they could do a patrol in that location.

Chair Trevor Eames reiterated that it is very important for residents to report all ASB, either on line or by ringing 101.

Police Presence in Dickens Heath

Councillor Richard Small asked what sort of Police presence could Dickens Heath expect? Sergeant Mills replied it would be as much as possible, but demand is currently huge – they currently have over 3,000 open logs across the force. On an early shift (8am to 4pm) they would expect to get 10 to 15 logs to deal with each day. This leaves very little in the way of resources for patrols, there is no capacity for Neighbourhood Policing. Soon there will be the Commonwealth Games, during which Sergeant Mills will be deployed elsewhere, and then there is the Tory Conference. On late shifts (2 till 11pm) they have a little more time, so more patrols should be seen.

A question was asked about crime prevention tactics. Sergeant Mills confirmed that the Neighbourhood Teams do work on prevention and there should be early intervention in cases of ASB. The Police can help to put pressure on local authorities if, for example, there is more ASB in areas that are poorly lit.

Number Plate Recognition

Councillor Di Potter asked whether number plate recognition could assist – Sergeant Mills replied that he will ask about that.

Village Streetwatch Group

The Chair welcomed Streetwatch representative Charley Vedmore to give an update. Charley said that several members of the group were present, and Streetwatch had evolved from Neighbourhood Watch. They currently have a full team of around 20 members, with teams of 6 to 8 residents going out on 4 or 5 days a week. They have identified many problem areas – observing drugs drops, dealing with fires, and identifying where extra lighting is needed. They proactively do what they can, they don't have any powers, but they do their bit. They really value the support of the Police, and are always happy to take them round. If kids are congregating, the Streetwatch group will generally make their presence known and the kids move on. They are insured, wear hi viz, and report issues of concern. Charley added that obvious spots which could do with some additional lighting include the dark alley at Waterside and outside the Village Hall.

It was commented that residents need to know how to report ASB – the local PCSO is the person to go to. PCSO Yvonne Dunn added that in cases of ASB, the Police need to build up intelligence so that the perpetrators can be identified and dealt with. Often the parents don't know, so the individuals need to be identified. She suggested that residents should sign up to WM Now which advises on crime in the local area.

Residents find that they can't get through on 101, the Webchat tends to be better – the PC can put advice on this out on social media.

Councillor Mike Small thanked both the Police and Streetwatch, asked if they would be prepared to come back to give an update in the future and to let the Parish Council know what they could do in support. Councillors Mike Small and Richard Small to follow up on this.

Police Success in the Village

A resident extended their thanks to the Police for their help – the resident's front door had been kicked in, the Police had caught the young people involved and as a result 2 lads have been banned from the village, and some parents had apologised for their children's behaviour.

The Parish Council extended their thanks once again to the Police and Streetwatch.

3. Minutes of the Previous Annual Parish Meeting held on March 9th 2021

These were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Report from the Parish Council Chair – Trevor Eames

Chair Trevor Eames thanked the Parish Council staff and current and former Parish Councillors for all of their hard work in keeping the Parish Council's activities running through the challenges of the past year, and also thanked residents for their input and involvement. He summarised some of the issues and achievements of the last year, which included:

- The Parish Council now have responsibility for the Village Green and playground and, following years of discussion and consultation, a tender is now out for a replacement playground.
- Improvements to the Village Green have included the installation of 4 new benches, 2 picnic tables, 4 bins and 4 dog bins. Sadly one bin and one bench have already been vandalised.
- In Bloom returned in 2021, with Dickens Heath achieving another Silver Gilt award as a result of the magnificent floral displays. The planters were maintained by residents and Parish Councillors, and once again there were many beautiful front gardens around the village.
- Acquisition of the Tesco Car Park from developers Elegant Homes to safeguard it for the future as a public car park.
- Representations against the loss of sports grounds in Tythe Barn Lane as a part of the Solihull Local Plan as it went to the Examination in Public.

The full report can be seen on the Parish Council website

5. Blythe Borough Councillors invited to Speak

Non present.

6. Issues of Particular Local Importance

Replacement Playground

A resident said that in his view the specification for the replacement playground is not ambitious enough. Councillor Trevor Eames replied that the play area is limited to its existing footprint under the lease agreement with SMBC. The Parish Council have been consulting on the playground for around 3 years – via a small working group of parents, through the school, and by taking professional advice on equipment and its longevity and safety standards. They had thought long and hard about whether steel or wood equipment was better, and had been advised against wood based on longevity and safety issues. The budget has been increased from £40,000 to £50,000, and the specification has gone out to tender to approved suppliers. There are 6 suppliers in this category, and 3 have declined to tender as they have too much work. If the consultation was to be started again, the process would be delayed by a year and no doubt the cost would increase. The resident reiterated that he doesn't believe that the specification meets what local parents want and that it needs to be revisited. Other residents commented that they didn't know that a consultation had taken place with the school children, and that the community could possibly fundraise to allow the playground to be upgraded.

Councillor Mike Small said that there was a great attendance at the meeting today, but usually the numbers of residents attending parish council meetings is very low. During the pandemic, meetings were held on Zoom and Councillors thought that more residents would join the meetings – but attendance didn't increase.

Communication

A resident raised the issue of communication with the community – that lots of residents don't know what the Parish Council is doing. Councillor Mike Small replied that the Parish Council is addressing this and will be speaking to an advisor about how communication can be improved. The Parish Councillors agreed that they would be happy to have a meeting with residents in the future to discuss how to proceed with improving communication with the community. Residents asked what was the best way to contact the Parish Council to get their views across – it is best to use email.

Goal Post on the Village Green

A resident asked whether the Parish Council had made a decision on whether to reinstate the goal post. Councillor Trevor Eames replied that a decision would be taken at the next Parish Council meeting on May 10th 2022. A reinstated goal post would have to be away from the road and away from the waterlogged area on the Village Green.

Woodland on Cleobury Lane

A resident said that there is a very high structure in these woods, it has been built by teenagers, it includes settees etc, and they have loud music on as they build it. The Streetwatch representatives added that they had looked at a structure in this location last year, but they hadn't seen anything this year. Councillor Trevor Eames replied that he would go and have a look at it, and that loud music could potentially be escalated to ASB.

Double Yellow Lines on Dickens Heath Rd alongside the Village Green

A resident asked when these double yellow lines were likely to be installed. The Parish Council has not yet received any details of the scheme - it will be advertised before it is implemented, residents nearby will be notified, and there will be a public consultation.

Members of the Parish Council thanked all the attendees for coming along to the Annual Parish Meeting.

Meeting ended 9.10pm