

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday September 29th 2022

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Mark Connolly-Dowson, Trevor Eames, Diane Potter, Nargis Rashid (from 7pm), Mike Small, Richard Small (Chair), Doreen Wright.

Borough Councillors; Ken Hawkins

11 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

Minute 63 (2022/23) Apologies for Absence

None.

Minute 64 (2022/23) Presentation of Prizes for Best Front Garden Competition

The Parish Council congratulated the winners and Councillor Doreen Wright presented the prizes to residents David Bourne, Vicky Chadaway and Priscilla Tickner.

Minute 65 (2022/23) Public Participation

Planning Application for 9 Houses at Wharf Farm

Several residents were present who objected to the proposed development of 9 houses on the Wharf Farm site. There are concerns that the entrance to the development will be dangerously close to the humpback bridge over the canal, and one of the proposed houses is very close to properties in Rumbush Lane. Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins said that there is a lot of concern from residents about the impact of the access being so close to the bridge, he has asked that this should go to Planning Committee, he will be objecting to the planning application, and he is encouraging residents to object. Councillor Trevor Eames confirmed that he has visited the site and lots of trees have been cut down – he asked Planning Enforcement to check, but they were not protected. He added that the developers have discussed the site with SMBC over a long period of time and have dealt with many planning issues that would have raised concerns – including the protection of Wharf Farm, which has been empty for around 5 years. The views of the SMBC Highways officers are not yet available, but the view of Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins is that the access point is hazardous. Councillor Trevor Eames added that further representations can be made once the Highways officers' report has been seen, in the meantime a strong objection to this proposal has been drafted which focusses on planning grounds and takes into account the views of residents.

Dead End Roads in the Village

A resident said that at some of the dead end roads which are closed to vehicles, for example Old Dickens Heath Rd at clock island, motorbikes and mopeds still drive through them – sometimes even driving through the bus queue at the clock island. The SMBC parking enforcement officer has been seen doing this. Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins replied that he would look into this, and any photo evidence would be useful.

New Playground

A resident congratulated the Parish Council on the new playground. Councillor Mark Connolly-Dowson replied that the contractors had finished today, with the final inspection due to take place tomorrow and an opening event planned for Saturday. A resident also asked if there could be a bin near to the benches by the Village Hall entrance as well.

Parish Council Meeting Days

A resident had been able to attend this PC meeting as it was held on a Thursday for a change – he asked if the day of the meeting could be varied to allow more residents to attend.

Minute 66 (2022/23) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None.

Minute 67 (2022/23) Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday June 21st 2022

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

Minute 68 (2022/23) Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Tuesday September 6th 2022

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

Minute 69 (2022/23) Future Meeting Dates and Location

Much of the Library 1st floor is now taken up by the community remote working space, and so alternative venues need to be considered for Parish Council meetings. The Village Hall is available on Thursday evenings, and the Hub at the School is available on Monday or Wednesday evenings. Or downstairs in the Library could potentially be used.

It was agreed, all in favour, that the next meetings should be held on Thursday October 20th 2022 in the Village Hall and then Tuesday November 29th 2022 in the Library (subject to permission from Library Services).

Minute 70 (2022/23) Clerk's Update on ActionsGP Surgery

Councillor Trevor Eames has spoken to Alison McGrory of SMBC about SHP concerns and she will follow this up.

Library Lease and Furniture

SMBC have asked whether the PC plans to retain the office and meeting space on the Library 1st floor. It was agreed that the PC would remain for the moment, a reduced rent will therefore be calculated by SMBC. A local community group has expressed an interest in having the wooden chairs that are now no longer needed – this was agreed.

New Playground Inspections

Fairways carry out a weekly playground inspection. Councillor Mark Connolly-Dowson agreed to also carry out a monthly inspection, a checklist should be provided once the post installation inspection has been completed.

Halloween and Bonfire Night

Streetwatch will be on patrol over Halloween and Bonfire Night, the Clerk to also request a Police presence in the village.

PAT Testing

This has been completed for 2022.

Minute 71 (2022/23) Planning ApplicationsWharf Farm, 123 Dickens Heath Rd - 2022/01866

Councillor Trevor Eames has drafted an objection – he proposed that this should be submitted to Planning at SMBC, with a supplementary representation once the Highways information is available, and that a PC representative should address Planning Committee. This was agreed, all in favour.

30 Birchy Close – 2022/01338

This is a slight amendment of a previous planning application – the previous response to be resubmitted.

Additional planning applications were also considered:

149 Rumbush Lane – 2022/01943 – a ground floor rear extension and new porch
 35 Meadow Pleck Lane – 2022/01937 – a single storey rear extension
 99 Main St – 2022/02029 – an addition of a bolt on balcony
 2 Brockhurst Lane – 2022/01752 – treeworks

No comments on all other planning applications.

Minute 72 (2022/23) Proposed Car Parking Scheme in the Village Centre

The Parish Council has not been directly involved in this proposal, but the Tesco car park is included in the scheme as it is in the Village Centre. A consultation with residents and businesses who pay the service charge to DHMC was overwhelmingly supportive, and Centrick have now sent out letters about the scheme to residents and businesses. Councillor Trevor Eames gave a summary of how the scheme will work – NPC are the chosen supplier to administer the scheme and they will provide all equipment and signage plus administer the scheme at no cost to the Parish Council or Dickens Heath Management Co. The Parish Council currently have no control over how the Tesco car park is used – vehicles can park in disabled bays or block others in. Does the PC want its car park to be part of this scheme?

Councillor Mike Small replied that he has spoken to several of the businesses, and they had no knowledge of a consultation. Some also don't have wifi, which they will have to install and will be an extra cost to them.

It was agreed that Councillor Mike Small should invite Phil of DHMC to attend a meeting with the Parish Council and residents.

Minute 73 (2022/23) Playground and Village Green

The new playground has now been installed, there are a couple of snagging items plus the bin will be replaced in November as there is currently a supply problem. Following the post installation inspection, which is due to take place tomorrow, there will be a public opening event at 11.30am on Saturday which the MP will be attending. Councillor Mark Connolly-Dowson requested funding of up to £50 for refreshments in the Village Hall for the occasion. This was agreed.

All agreed the funding of a new lamp post by the playground, to be supplied by SMBC at a cost of £5,529 plus VAT, which will hugely improve the lighting in that part of the Village Green and hopefully deter vandals. The lamp post is due to be installed in October.

The invoice for the playground installation has been received from Kompan, for £64,605.73 plus VAT, it was agreed that this should be paid once the post installation inspection has been successfully completed and the cheque was signed.

Minute 74 (2022/23) Trimming Back of Village Green Trees

Some of the lamp posts on the edge of the Village Green are being swamped by the foliage of nearby trees. It was agreed that a quote should be obtained for trimming them back.

Minute 75 (2022/23) Solar Christmas Trees

A quote has been received from Plantscape, for the usual number of solar Christmas trees to hang on 28 lamp posts, of £2,720 plus VAT. It was agreed, all in favour, that the solar Christmas trees should be ordered.

Minute 76 (2022/23) Remembrance Sunday Service

The documentation for the usual road closures has been completed and forwarded to SMBC. It was agreed that the wreaths should be ordered from the Royal British Legion and a £100 donation made. It was also agreed that Rev Theresa Jones and Rev Denise Jones be invited to the October Parish Council meeting.

Minute 77 (2022/23) Request for Externally Sited Defibrillator

There is a defibrillator sited inside Tesco, which is open from 6am to 11pm, with the Tesco staff all trained to assist. The Police have borrowed it twice, but it is probable that most residents in Dickens Heath don't know that it is there. It was agreed that there should be some signage in the Village, plus promotion to residents, of the location of the defibrillator in Tesco. An externally sited defibrillator is likely to cost around £2,000 – a resident suggested that Dickens Heath Scouts could do some fund raising towards this. Councillor Mike Small to follow this up.

Minute 78 (2022/23) Nature Reserve at Waterside

A request has been made to the PC for a contribution towards works to the nature reserve at Waterside. The work required includes footpath maintenance, step replacement, block paving repair plus work to the stream. The cost is likely to be over DHMC's budget for it, and they may have to close the nature reserve if the area can't be used safely. It was agreed that DHMC be asked to confirm costs, and what level of funding they are requesting from the Parish Council. A resident present at the meeting suggested that DHMC could consider donating the nature reserve to the Woodland Trust.

Minute 79 (2022/23) Recruitment of Parish Clerk

A number of applications have been received, and interviews will take place on Monday October 3rd 2022, the Chair thanked Councillor Nargis Rashid for her work on this. It was agreed, by a majority of Councillors, that the interview panel of Councillors Richard Small, Nargis Rashid and Mike Small could make a decision following the interviews and offer the position to the successful candidate.

Minute 80 (2022/23) Communications Strategy

The Chair confirmed that the Communications Strategy recommendations will be presented to the Parish Council in the near future.

A quote has been received from Tom Clay of Breakthrough Communications of £225 plus VAT to develop an eNewsletter – this was agreed, all in favour. A newsletter will also be posted on the noticeboard and in the Library.

Minute 81 (2022/23) Establishment of Parish Council Committees

The Chair is still awaiting a template Terms of Reference from WALC, but will look at examples from other parish councils in the meantime.

Minute 82 (2022/23) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Di Potter, seconded by Councillor Richard Small, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the September 29th 2022 Agenda be approved – 21 payments totalling £12,607.45 for September 2022, 4 additional payments for September 2022 totalling £487.00 including an additional payment of £54.00 for hire of the Village Hall, 20 payments totalling £9,565.37 for August 2022 and 18 payments totalling £16,282.01 for July 2022.

Routine Monthly Payments

As the next few meetings have been moved towards the end of the month, it was agreed that the salaries, Councillors' allowances and other routine payments should be paid in the middle of the month as usual.

Finance Report

The VAT reclaim of £7,031.88 for 2021/22 has now been received. The Parish Council currently has a surplus of £114,000, however the projected end of year surplus has now reduced to £29,000 with the payment for the playground pending.

Councillors' Allowances

The level of Parish Councillors' allowances are based on SMBC Borough Councillors' allowances, which have been increased by 5%. Councillor Trevor Eames proposed that Parish Councillors should forego the increase for this year due to the Parish Council's lessened reserves. This was agreed by a majority of Councillors.

Renewal of the External Audit Arrangements for 2022/23 to 2026/27

It was agreed that the Parish Council should remain in the nationally agreed arrangements for the external audit contract for 2022/23 to 2026/27.

Festival on the Green Balance of Funds

A request has been received asking that the Parish Council holds the remaining balance of funds of £350 from Festival on the Green until it can be put towards the next community event. This was agreed.

Minute 83 (2022/23) Other Items on the Agenda

Correspondence and the final 4 items under Agenda Item 11 Village Areas of Interest were deferred to the next meeting due to a lack of time.

Minute 84 (2022/23) 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 85 (2022/23) Review of the Effectiveness of the Parish Council

Internal communication within the PC was discussed.

Meeting ended 9.05pm

Next Meeting : Thursday October 20th 2022: 6.30pm in the Library