

## The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday October 20<sup>th</sup> 2022

**Present:**

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

Borough Councillors; Ken Hawkins

Rev Theresa Jones

3 members of the public

Clerk: Ms Helen Marczak

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**Minute 89 (2022/23) Apologies for Absence**

None.

**Minute 90 (2022/23) Rev Theresa Jones – Remembrance Service**

Rev Theresa Jones is attending to discuss the Remembrance Sunday Service. She said that Rev Denise Jones of St Patrick’s Church was not available this evening, but would like to meet the Parish Councillors and will attend a future meeting.

**Minute 91 (2022/23) Public Participation**

Planning Applications in Dickens Heath

A resident raised concern that homeowners are extending their properties and carrying out developments without planning approval. Permitted development doesn’t apply in Dickens Heath, but many residents may be unaware of this. Some unattractive development is taking place without a planning application – can the Parish Council tackle this? The resident has queried this with Solihull MBC Planning, but didn’t get a response. Councillor Trevor Eames commented that reputable builders should do a good job, but don’t always know that there is no permitted development here. He added that the Parish Council do publish all planning applications on the website, but there is rarely feedback from residents, the Parish Council can only act if they are informed. Councillor Eames suggested that he speak to Solihull MBC Planning for advice, and that the planning rules could be published to raise awareness with residents. It was suggested that if skips are seen outside properties – then checks for a planning application could be made online. Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins added that in other parts of Solihull there is permitted development and so it isn’t a problem. In Dickens Heath, homeowners may find that lack of planning approval is a problem when they try to sell, they would then need to obtain retrospective planning permission or take out an indemnity.

**Minute 92 (2022/23) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

None.

**Minute 93 (2022/23) Report from Borough Councillors**

Wharf Farm

Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins gave an update on the planning application for 9 houses at Wharf Farm – it is going to Planning Committee and a petition with over 60 signatures of objection has been handed in.

Tidbury Green Farm

The Tidbury Green Farm planning application does not now need to go to Planning Committee as they are happy with it.

Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022

Signature.....

Date.....

Hares Croft

The planning application is pending for the new development of Hares Croft on land south of Dog Kennel Lane – it consists of 732 houses, it's included in the Solihull Local Plan, and his advice is to try to shape it as much as possible. The main impact for Dickens Heath will be at the island by Miller and Carter – what mitigation is needed there? There is no road transport plan yet. Councillor Mike Small asked if the new properties would have solar panels etc? Borough Councillor Hawkins replied that they will have Electric Vehicle charging points. He added that at the moment it is a planning application, and there will be a consultation. The developer is holding an information session on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. Councillor Trevor Eames added that the outline planning application needs to be seen, that this is just the first phase and there will be another phase of around 300 houses, giving a total of approximately 1,000 houses for the site.

**Minute 94 (2022/23) Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday September 29<sup>th</sup> 2022**

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

**Minute 95 (2022/23) Clerk's Update on Actions**Solar Lamp Post Christmas Trees

These have been ordered. A request has been received for one additional tree on a lamp post by the central green space on The Paddocks. This was agreed.

Village Green Tree Inspections

Solihull MBC's Forestry Team has confirmed that they will be inspecting the trees on the Village Green during November/December 2022.

**Minute 96 (2022/23) Planning Applications**

One additional planning application was considered:  
251 Dickens Heath Rd - 2022/02017 - treeworks

No comments on the planning applications.

**Minute 97 (2022/23) Proposed Car Parking Scheme in the Village Centre**

The car parking scheme is still pending, Chair Richard Small to follow up on inviting a representative of Dickens Heath Management Co. to attend a Parish Council meeting.

**Minute 98 (2022/23) Playground and Village Green**Toddler Swings

Residents have raised concerns that the new toddler swings are too low, Councillor Mark Connolly-Dowson has requested and received an adjustment tool plus instructions from playground supplier Kompan, Councillors to carry out the adjustment.

New Wet Pour Playground Flooring

The tarmac around the edge of the new playground is the original flooring, the new coloured wet pour is on top, much thicker and slightly raised, and therefore the flooring surface is uneven at the edges. The tarmac could also be covered with wetpour which would result in an even surface. A quote has been received from Kompan for this work of £8,906 plus VAT. Or it was suggested that possibly some of the gaps could be bridged with wetpour so that less of the outer flooring is tarmac. Councillor Trevor Eames commented that the edges are slopes and have been certified as safe, and doesn't think that anything further needs to be done. There needs to be a replacement playground notice, which includes child supervision responsibilities. Former Parish Councillor Alan Scholes, who was involved in looking at the original playground specification, was of the view that the gaps in the wet pour couldn't be bridged without digging out large sections of the new wet pour. Councillor Mike Small added that the Parish Council has currently only received one written complaint about the flooring being a trip hazard. It was agreed that no action should be taken regarding the flooring at the moment, but that it should be monitored.

Playground Sign

It was agreed that a new sign including playground rules and supervision responsibilities is required. Councillor Trevor Eames to look at signs at other playgrounds and to draft some wording.

Village Green Safety Inspection

The annual Village Green Safety Inspection was carried out on September 28<sup>th</sup> 2022, and the report was received. It was agreed that everything was satisfactory and no work was required.

**Minute 99 (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 Councillor Trevor Eames should obtain a firm quote and a date arranged for these trees to be trimmed back.

**Minute 100 (2022/23) Remembrance Sunday Service**

The service sheet has been updated for God Save the King, and the poster's date updated. A new stock of the service sheets needs to be ordered, along with 25 posters for this year – this was agreed. The wreaths have been ordered. Central Fast Response will be attending as First Aiders, it was agreed that the usual donation of £75 would be made. The Scouts are attending, Nick Tickner will be playing keyboards, and Dickens Heath Management Co. will loan their barriers. Rev Theresa Jones has asked whether refreshments will be provided after the service, the Clerk to find out if the Scouts are using the Village Hall and if it is available. The Clerk to remind Tesco about no delivery lorries during the service.

**Minute 101 (2022/23) Nature Reserve at Waterside**

No information has yet been received from DHMC – the Clerk to chase this up.

**Minute 102 (2022/23) Winter Planting of Planters**

There are planters in the village centre, at Waterside and by the School which volunteers and the school have offered to plant up for the winter. There was a discussion about the level of funding that the PC would be willing to support. Councillor Doreen Wright proposed that an amount per planter should be approved – for example up to £20 per big planter both for summer and winter, with lesser amounts for the smaller planters, plus a request that they also be watered in the summer. This proposal was agreed, Councillor Nargis Rashid to look at levels of funding for the smaller planters.

**Minute 103 (2022/23) Complaint about Lack of Pedestrian Walkway from Lady's Hall Lane to the Country Park**

This pedestrian walkway was a condition of the development, but it has not been provided, and a complaint has been received by Solihull MBC from a member of the public. Councillor Trevor Eames said that it is now too late for SMBC to enforce, and proposed that the PC defer looking at the complaint – this was agreed.

**Minute 104 (2022/23) Land at Light Hall Farm – New Development of Hares Croft**

Taylor Wimpey are holding a public information event on November 1<sup>st</sup> to outline their proposals for 732 new homes on this land south of Dog Kennel Lane, Shirley. Unfortunately members of the Parish Council are unable to attend this event, the Clerk to ask if representatives of Taylor Wimpey would meet with the PC at a future date.

**Minute 105 (2022/23) Library Warm Space**

Dickens Heath Library is one of many libraries that have been designated as 'warm spaces' to welcome residents, who may be struggling to afford to heat their homes, to stay as long as they like. Councillor Mike Small has spoken to the Librarian and they have a wish list of games and puzzles, along with a daily newspaper, for the warm space. The estimated cost is around £150 plus £5 per week for the newspaper. There was some discussion about whether the community could donate some games, however the Librarian is concerned that they may

get inundated with games they don't want. All agreed that the PC should support this initiative and purchase the games, puzzles and newspapers.

### **Minute 106 (2022/23) Proposal for a Village Pride Event in 2023**

Councillor Mark Connolly-Dowson said that he attended a NALC LGBT+ virtual meeting, and has spoken with Karen Grant who supports Equality and Diversity at Solihull MBC, and would like Dickens Heath PC to tie in with the SMBC Calendar of Cultural Events. He would envisage that this would be part of the Communications and Events Committee's role. He proposed that the PC should support a Pride Event in 2023, and that this would be one of several community events. Following some debate, it was agreed that the Communications Committee should consult with residents to find out which events the community would like to see, and these should be supported.

### **Minute 107 (2022/23) Recruitment of Parish Clerk**

The enhanced pension scheme was approved at the October 18<sup>th</sup> 2022 Parish Council meeting and this has been offered to the successful candidate Hannah Raithby-Allin.

### **Minute 108 (2022/23) Communications Strategy**

The Communications Strategy recommendations will be presented to Councillors at an informal meeting the following week.

### **Minute 109 (2022/23) Financial Matters**

Proposed by Councillor Di Potter, seconded by Councillor Doreen Wright, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the October 20<sup>th</sup> 2022 Agenda be approved – 23 payments totalling £81,725.07 including additional payments of £36.00 and £24.00 to WALC and £36.00 to SLCC, all for training courses.

### Finance Report

The Parish Council has a current surplus of £73,000, and a projected end of year surplus of £29,000 now that the playground installation has been paid for.

Councillor Di Potter verified the bank reconciliation to the bank statements as at September 30<sup>th</sup> 2022.

### **Minute 110 (2022/23) Correspondence**

#### Lease of Library 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

The solicitors are still holding £1,800 of the Parish Council's funds with regard to work on the lease of the Library 1<sup>st</sup> floor. It was agreed that as this was not proceeding at the moment, a request should be made for the funds to be returned.

#### Bench Overlooking the Canal

A resident has concerns about a bench which overlooks the canal, it is just off Hutchings Lane/Brockhurst Lane. The view of the canal is disappearing due to the overgrowth of trees. Members of the Parish Council have taken a look at this – the land looks to be maintained by Solihull MBC who cut the grass. Councillors felt that the bench and vegetation look ok.

#### Trees at Packmores

A resident of Packmores is concerned about a neighbour's trees which are growing over their garden and also over the rear joint access walkway. Councillor Trevor Eames has had a look at this – the trees are deciduous and reduce the impact of overlooking from the nearby apartments. It was agreed that the Parish Council has no power to act on this issue, and the resident should be referred to the Solihull MBC Tree Officer.

#### Ambulance Aid

A resident has drawn the Parish Council's attention to Ambulance Aid who are collecting donations of medical equipment for Ukraine. The Parish Council agreed that they would be happy to promote a collection day for this cause, but have no facility to store donations.

#### Solihull MBC Customer Support

Solihull MBC are looking to set up a working group to pilot using a self service digital account. It was agreed that the PC would potentially be happy to be involved in this.

**Minute 111 (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 112 (2022/23) How We Improve our Effectiveness as a Parish Council**  
A date was set for an informal meeting to discuss internal communication.

**Meeting ended 8.45pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday November 29<sup>th</sup> 2022: 6.30pm in the Library**