

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday January 16th 2024

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Richard Small (Chair), Mark Connolly-Dowson, Maureen Holloway, Liz Woodus, Mike Small and Dave Easterby

5 members of the public

Planning Advisor to the Council, Jean Walters

Clerk: Ms H Raithby

Minute 249 (2023/24) Apologies for Absence

None

Minute 250 (2023/24) Public Participation

Flooding in Dickens Heath Road

Resident wanted to ask if we're able to put some pressure on Solihull Council with regards to the flooding that keeps happening in Dickens Heath. Councillor Small advised that we have this on the agenda and there is an update from Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins about the flooding.

Working Group for Site BL1

Resident offered to be on the Working Group if this is going to happen. He feels this would be a good thing to do. Councillor Richard Small advises other attendees on the Planning application coming in for this site and the background information. He then asked the Parish Council if they felt a working group would be a good idea. Councillor Mike Small asked what the working group would offer. Councillor Richard Small advised that it would deal with written communication to Solihull Council and produce formal documents. Jean Walters advised that it would involve people from the community, there must be one member of the Parish Council. The working party would have no powers as such but make recommendations. We have a number of people that would be perfect to join the group. One of the main ways to challenge on this is Highways, we have a highways expert who can help. It can be quite informal, but we need to act quite quickly.

Jean Walters suggested we need to go back to Solihull Council to ask for more time as there are various elements that need to be looked at and because they haven't provided all information with the application, we can't address those issues yet.

Richard Holt who is one of the Ward Members has refused to comment on the application due to being the chair of the planning committee, member of the public suggested that we write to him and ask him to comment, as he is a ward member first and foremost.

Resident went to the consultation where many residents were raising issues, none of these have been addressed by the developer. Councillor Mike Small pointed out that other members of the Council may not be opposed to the development. Resident spoke about the Council having pressure to meet a housing need which is set by the government, there are pressures for Solihull to take on more.

Councillor R Small advises that NPPF is changing the way these things happen, the Solihull Local plan is at a regulation 19 stage and the guidance doesn't apply to those that are at that stage. You can still challenge the planning application due to it being on Greenbelt land but there is an element of risk that Solihull Council may be able to overrule this. Jean Walters advises that she has had advice from a lot of top planning Barristers where they looked at situations similar to Solihull's, as a backstop we can use the old NPPF paragraph 11 'if you have to go into the greenbelt then you don't have to provide all of your housing need'.

Solihull could use this. The new rules make it such that they could write to Birmingham and get rid of the 2000 houses with one letter. There is still a question at the NEC on whether that

is deliverable. That is 1800 houses which leaves 200 gap there. We can prove that we can achieve the four year housing land supply.

Councillor Mike Small asked what is happening about the sporting facilities, Jean Walters replies that this needs to be part of the response that we put together. Jean Walters advises that the junction of Birchy Leasowes Lane and Dickens Heath road is not shown on any of the plans that have been provided. A resident asked if anyone has spoken to Solihull Council’s planning department, Jean Walters states that there is no point in doing this, they will just say that the plans are done. Councillor Richard Small suggested that there are still opportunities for us to get our point across. We will decide in section 6 of the agenda.

Minute 251 (2023/24) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None

Minute 252 (2023/24) Update from Borough Councillors

The chair relays the email Ken Hawkins sent:

- Planning application – I am surprised one was submitted without disclosure as to where the lost sports facilities would go. You will be aware I am opposed to this one and have launched a petition accordingly.
- Flooding – I am meeting with officers to look at how the village can be assisted, especially on Dickens Heath Rd, near the bungalow. I feel this location is crucial for access/egress.
- Ward boundary changes – the boundary commission should report on their recommendations from next week.

Minute 253 (2023/24) Minutes of the meeting held 14th November 2023

Proposed by Councillor Mark Connolly-Dowson, seconded by Councillor Mike Small, it was

Resolved that the minutes be approved as a true and accurate record.

Minute 254 (2023/24) Parish Council Decisions

Working Group on Site BL1

All Councillors agree to having a working group, there will be a Social media post put out to the public to ask for expressions of interest from volunteers with relevant experience. Parish Councillors who would like to be involved in this project are Maureen Holloway and Liz Woodus.

Centrick.

All agree to set up a meeting to discuss water pressure issues and ownership of the Pumping Station.

Car Parking Scheme

All agree to remove this as a standing item on the agenda and replace it with ‘Highways Update on Private Roads’

Table Tennis Table on the Green

This will be considered, we will put out a social media post to see what the residents think of the idea, if there are a lot who would like it then it will be considered at the next meeting.

Minute 255 (2023/24) Finance and Risk Committee

Councillor Easterby gave an update on The Finance and Risk Committee meeting to discuss the budget, most of the budget will stay the same, apart from where we’ve had to allow for inflation. We have also consolidated a few items where they are better together. In terms of the most significant changes we have reduced the admin expenses, the hanging basket cost is going to be reduced, we are looking at spending this money on the islands as we can’t use the lamp posts for this any more. The Christmas lights budget is slightly higher as we are having to purchase our own lights from Solihull Council due to being unable to use Solihull Council Lamp Posts for outside supplier’s lights any more. Decrease in island and lamp post budget due to the islands being the responsibility of Solihull Council. We are going to be saving a significant amount on the Library rental due to using significantly less space.

Insurance is slightly lower than originally expected. We want to increase the reserve a little bit. We are proposing an increase in the Precept of 10%, there was an increase last year but there wasn’t an increase for the five years before that. When you put 10% in to perspective it is around £3.80 for the year for a band D property. We have the website cost to keep in mind, also have the pumping station and insurance costs to think about. Reserve is normally 50% of precept so we need to increase this. We may also have consultancy costs to challenge the

large planning application. Salaries have also increased. All Councillors agree to the budget and precept increase for 2024/25.

Training and Dignity at work Policy

This will be dealt with at the next meeting as there wasn't time at the last meeting.

Highways Expert

All agree in principal to the cost of £2500. Only if it gets to the point where it is necessary.

Minute 256 (2023/24) Communications and Events Committee

Update

The last event we did was the Christmas event, lights switch on. It was very successful and well attended Tesco donated about 150 mince pies which was great and Mortons allowed us to use the space outside which worked well. We would like to plan more for next year, maybe have the school choir and Anya/Boogaloo babes as well?

D-Day celebrations

Councillor Woodus is at the Village Hall meeting this week so she will be able to mention the dates if required. Usually the borough council will get in touch when there's a big event like the D-day. We need to start planning what we're going to do, the actual beacon lighting will happen on the 6th which is a Thursday and then a full celebration on the Saturday.

Meeting

The Communication and Events Committee will be arranged for Councillors Mike Small, Mark Connolly-Dowson, Liz Woodus and Richard Small, this will be publicised as well.

Quiz

This is not possible at the moment due to time constraints. Councillor Woodus advises that there are two new directors of the Village Hall who are keen to get involved, she will get some more information.

Minute 257 (2023/24) Tesco Car Park

No Update/see previous discussion.

Minute 258 (2023/24) Councillors' Action Log and Clerk's Update

Belway site and Traffic Enforcement

Councillor Holloway updates that she has had some progress on the problems with parking on the Belway site. Solihull Council have had a problem with the adoptions register which they are currently sorting out. They think they can start ticketing, they are going to let us know.

Minute 259 (2023/24) To Consider Village Areas of Interest

Speed Reduction Proposals

Councillor Richard Small has had a meeting with Paul Tovey and has a few proposals going forward.

1-Solihull Council to provide a speed visor sign. Information and costs. This would be portable so it can be moved regularly. It needs to be on a stretch of road around 100-150metres to pick up the speed. Paul Tovey will provide costs for this and for moving it.

2-Opposite the playground area where the double yellow lines are, they can paint a child safety warning on the road.

3-Solihull Council will review all of the roads in Dickens Heath for gaps in the 20mph signage, Paul Tovey will come back to us on this.

All Councillors vote in favour of these proposals.

Speedwatch

Can we invite the Police to the next meeting to discuss this and ask if we're able to do another Speedwatch at some point.

Floral Displays

Arrange for a meeting with Alan McGregor at Plantscape. Councillors Holloway and Woodus agree to do this along with the Clerk.

Youth Club at The Hub

Although the Parish Council has agreed to its part of the funding, Solihull Council funding is not forthcoming at the moment, there is a meeting arranged for the 30th January to discuss this with Austin Rodriguez. Our £3000 that has been allocated to this will just stay in our reserves for now.

Library

Update - £210 of the budget has been spent so far this year, Baillie Carlton has been invited to attend one of the meetings to discuss the extra hours for the Library. Cathy and Amy have made the Library a thriving central area – could we do a feature on Cathy? Community hub, getting more visitors – to try to raise awareness of the Library.

Fairways Contract

We have decided to look at new quotes for the regular maintenance of the Village Green etc. as we received some excessive quotes for one off jobs from Fairways which led us to wonder if we are paying over the odds for everything. We have had one quote which was a bit cheaper but will be looking for at least two more quotes

Free Trees

Councillor Woodus updated that the Nature Reserve can't be used for this as the farmer cuts the grass for animal feed so the trees would be cut along with that. We don't really have a bit of land that is appropriate for this at the moment, maybe revisit at a later date.

Minute 260 (2023/24) To Consider Planning Applications

2023/02656 – outline planning application for erection of up to 450 dwellings – Land south of Tythe Barn Lane Shirley Solihull – The Council have agreed to set up a working party to object to this planning application.

Minute 261 (2023/24) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Mike Small, seconded by Councillor Maureen Holloway, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I and Appendix II of the January 2024 agenda be approved – 14 payments for January totalling £4784.07. And 16 payments for December 2023 totalling £6757.86

All Councillors agreed to change the insurance to Clear Councils.

Minute 262 (2023/24) 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 263a (2023/24)

Vacancy for Parish Councillor

All agreed that Adam Weber should be co-opted on to the Parish Council.

Minute 263b (2023/24)

Civility and Respect

This was discussed by the Councillors.

Meeting ended 9.20pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday February 20th 2023: 6.30pm in the Library