

The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday September 10th 2024

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Richard Small (Chair), Adam Weber, Stewart Halford, Maureen Holloway, Liz Woodus.

12 members of the public, 2 representatives from Centrick, Jean Walters (Planning Advisor), and Borough Councillors Keith Green and Ken Hawkins

Clerk: Ms H Raithby, Responsible Financial Officer: Helen Marczak

Minute 53 (2024/25) Apologies for Absence

Councillor Mike Small

Minute 54 (2024/25) Public Participation

Centrick

Representatives from Centrick joined us at the meeting, following the Parish Council meeting about planning the previous evening, to clarify things and ask our opinion on ideas for Main Street going forward. They advised that Main Street was originally designed to be pedestrianised, not for cars. Main Street is falling into disrepair as it wasn't designed to be used the way it is. It is still currently maintained by Dickens Heath Management Company who need to make some decisions on what to do, especially with potential new developments in the area. It isn't fair to be left to the Dickens Heath Management Company leaseholders. They may need to decide to close it in some way in order to prevent it being used as a rat run, they may decide to use something to obstruct the middle to stop vehicles passing. Centrick are in talks with Solihull Council, there are problems with manholes and other background issues of this kind so they need to take action now. The directors are in agreement that something needs to be done. Centrick need to communicate with the residents of Dickens Heath. The current options are to 1- block off the road, near the new gym on Main Street, with planters which will stop any through traffic, this could be something moveable so that it can still be accessed when necessary and it would be pedestrian only or 2- close the road completely, so there would be no vehicular access, just pedestrian. There are concerns around loss of parking. They will be asking the leaseholders for their opinions but wanted to approach the Parish Council and residents to give the opportunity for engagement and ideas, they are open to suggestions. Residents that are present agree that it is a good idea, one suggests that there are bollards that go up and down to allow access Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins speaks about the issues they are experiencing on Main Street, he has done some research and there are other areas in the same situation. Solihull Council's legal position is that the management company should go to The Crown estates but the Borough Councillors appreciate that there is a moral issue, unfortunately it has to go through the usual legal processes.

Centrick discuss the state that the highway on Main Street is in and that there may be more issues that are unknown at the moment. Some of the original documentation has been lost when the area went into administration.

Councillor Richard Small asked about the practicalities of closing part of the road and how people who enter the area can turn around to get out again if the road is blocked off. He discussed the idea of spaces being lost and the difference in closing the entire road. He advised that the Parish Council aren't against the idea but that it needs some more development. He asked Centrick to write to the Clerk with the different options outlined with details on the turning points.

There was a discussion around the cost of repairing Main Street. Centrick have previously had quotes in the region of sixty thousand pounds for the drain work etc and seventy thousand for everything. They are happy to share this information with the Parish Council. There may be more problems discovered when work gets underway. Andy from Centrick will email us with the information. A resident suggested that there may be a covenant on the road that states there must be a highway. Jean advises that they need to go back to the original section 106 agreements, she has seen them when looking into a different matter.

Planning Issue

A resident raised an ongoing issue with a property in the village where the owner has built an extension without correct permissions, Jean advised that Solihull Council Planning will be writing to the resident.

Braggs Farm Lane

A resident is concerned about the 'Road Closed' signs on Braggs Farm Lane and wondered if anyone knew why they were still there when the work has finished. The Parish Council wasn't aware of the reason for this but will keep an eye on it.

Minutes

At the last meeting a resident raised an issue that he feels there was a mistake in previous minutes where Ken Hawkins stated that Main Street is with The Crown. The Clerk checked this and the minutes are correct to what was said in the meeting, although the information given needs to be checked. This has now been clarified by Centrick at this meeting.

Waterside Car Park.

A resident raised some issues they have been having in the Waterside car park with it being flooded and waterlogged so that he cannot access his car in the way that he needs to. Centrick updated that they have installed a pump to get rid of the water which has worked. They have had a structural engineer out to try to work out what the problem is which is proving to be quite difficult. They are working on it but for now, the pump will keep the water down.

For issues such as this, Andy from Centrick advised that he is always in the management office on Tuesdays between 10am and 4pm so that residents can go and see him.

Minute 55 (2024/25) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations

None

Minute 56 (2024/25) Update from Borough Councillors

Local Plan Update

Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins spoke about the Local Plan update, he feels the upshot of this is 2000 homes in the area. The focus has to be on local infrastructure and the BL1 Sports Facilities. He feels that the Dog Kennel Lane development is slightly different. There may be more developments coming along. We haven't had the usual flash flooding this summer which may be down to key areas being cleared more often. The area near the bungalow that floods has a culvert near it which can't cope when heavy rain comes. That means that Cheswick Green also floods. More balancing ponds are needed in new developments.

Budgets

Solihull Council has to think of ways to save money, they have a big problem. One idea is to cut waste collection and have it fortnightly, they will be introducing food collection which has to be in place by 2026.

BL1 South

It is all about the relocation of the sports pitches and infrastructure requirements. Jean Walters requested that Ken speak to Borough Councillor Richard Holt about the event that the Parish Council held in the Village Hall last night about the developments. She has been studying the NPPF framework. She feels that the old Local Plan didn't work and this gives us a chance to produce a new Local Plan that does work and she is willing to give her time to help write it. Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins feels we need the sites in the new plan. Jean feels she has a lot of evidence to get rid of the 2000 homes affiliated with Birmingham. Borough Councillor Keith Green offered his apologies for missing last night's meeting.

Minute 57 (2024/25) To Receive an update from the Planning Advisory Group about BL1

Updated that the meeting about the developments in the Village, held in the Village Hall on the 9th of September 2024, was extremely successful with 150-200 residents attending. Councillor Holloway suggested that we have more noticeboards in the Village. This is to be added to the Strategy for the Parish Council.

Minute 58 (2024/25) Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on July 10th 2024
Councillors Stewart Halford proposed, and Adam Weber seconded, all in favour, the minutes are approved.

Minute 59 (2024/25) Youth Club

The successful bidder for the Youth Club provision is Winner Sports, they were meant to attend the meeting but unfortunately couldn't make it. They will be running the Youth Club at the HUB by Dickens Heath School twice a week; Mondays 6-7.30pm for 8-13 year olds and Friday 6-8pm for 14-17 year olds. We need to get clarification on whether this is term time only. The Parish Council are really pleased to be able to provide this for the older children in the village in collaboration with Solihull Council. Winner sport is an accredited provider and has a youth worker.

Minute 60 (2024/25) Parish Council Decisions

Village Hall/anonymous posting on Facebook

There are some issues with the decibel meter in the Village Hall, this was seen at the meeting on the 9th September when it was triggered by people just walking past. There have been some unpleasant comments made on Facebook about the Village Hall. We will have the Village Hall as a standing agenda item going forward.

Speed Visor

We need to go back to Paul Tovey/Rob Wyatt at Solihull Council as they have the information, we need to know if we can go ahead.

Christmas Trees

All apart from Councillor Halford agree to having ten of the floor standing Christmas trees on the roundabouts this year. Councillor Holloway and the Clerk will have a walkaround and decide on the suggested placement, to be agreed by the Council at the next meeting.

Personalised Gazebo for Events

All agree to spend £623.50+VAT for a Gazebo, this is the most recent quote following us providing the coat of arms artwork that we would like to have printed on the Gazebo.

Microphone Stand

All agree to spend around £21.99 for this.

Minute 61 (2024/25) Finance and Risk Committee

There will need to be a meeting to agree some recommendations for the budget soon as this will need to be presented in November as there is no meeting in December. If any Councillors would like to have input into this to request money be set aside for something. This will be put on the Agenda for October. The final decision on the budget will at the January meeting.

Minute 62 (2024/25) Communications and Events Committee

The Dickens Heath Fun Day event was extremely successful, they would like to make it an annual event going forward. There was a discussion about the Remembrance event and who is taking care of what job for this event. Councillor Holloway agreed that she will liaise with Rev. Theresa but will not be able to attend the event. The Communication and Events Committee are helping to organise the event along with the Clerk, Rev. Theresa. There will be four Councillors available to help on the day. Councillors R Small, S Halford, L Woodus and A Weber. It was agreed that we need to have three checklists, one for the Clerk, one for communication between Councillor Holloway and Rev. Theresa and one for the Comms Committee.

Minute 63 (2024/25) Councillors' Action Log and Clerk's Update

The Clerk requested that all Councillors go through the action log and let her know of any updates or corrections that need to be made.

Minute 64 (2024/25) To Consider Village Areas of Interest

Speed Reduction Proposals

No update

Youth Club at Community Hub

Minutes of Dickens Heath Parish Council Meeting held Tuesday 10th September 2024

Signature.....

Date.....

Already Updated

Library

No Update

Service Charges in the Village

No Update

Table Tennis Table

This is a great success, there have been lots of people using it. The Parish Council need to look into getting some protective mats for the surrounding area to protect the grass.

Lamp Posts/Christmas Lights

Already updated

Parish Council Strategy

We had a visit from the chairman of Leafield Ladies Football Club which is on Rumbush Lane in the Village. He is eager to grow relationships locally. They have lots of great green space and a club house with a bar. They would really like to get the facilities used more. They would also really love to get the first team back playing on this site, at the moment they play elsewhere. In order to do this, they have to have certain things in place to comply with the rules. They have a new committee who are trying to improve things. The Parish Council will add this to their strategy list of things they may like to get involved with.

Councillor Weber suggested that we have a festival along the Canal Towpath alongside another event next year. He advised that The Canals and Rivers Trust haven't given a timeline on when they might do the work on the towpath but he feels we should just go ahead anyway. This will be added to the possible strategies as well.

IT Platform Update

Councillors R Small and A Weber are going to meet to agree how to do the IT rollout. Councillor Weber needs to agree a time to work with the Clerk to do the Gov.UK email addresses.

Minute 65 (2024/25) To Consider Planning Applications

No comments to be made on any planning applications.

Minute 66 (2024/25) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Richard Small, seconded by Councillor Maureen Holloway, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the September 10th agenda for August be approved - 15 payments totalling £5066.90.

Proposed by Councillor Richard Small, seconded by Councillor Maureen Holloway, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the September 10th 2024 agenda for September be approved – 20 payments totalling £5926.73 and additional payments of £30.00 for Orton Media, £48.79 for H Raithby for printer cartridges and £66.00 for the Village Hall booking.

To Consider a Proposal to Move Parish Council Bank Accounts to Unity Trust Bank

We have been having a lot of issues with the current bank. All agree to change to Unity Trust Bank who are used by lots of trusted sources within the industry.

To Consider for Approval West Midlands Pension Fund Employer Mandatory Discretions Policy

All agree to the policy as advised by Responsible Financial Officer Helen Marczak which has no financial risk to the Parish Council.

Rent For Office Space

We have still not received the invoice for this.

Precept – Second Instalment

This has now been received.

Minute 67 (2024/25) Correspondence

Nothing to update at the moment.

Meeting ended 9.05pm

Next Meeting : Tuesday 8th October 2024: 6.30pm in the Library