

## The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

### Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday May 13th 2025

**Present:**

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

4 members of the public and Charley from Streetwatch

Clerk: Ms Hannah Raithby

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**Minute 1 (2025/26) Election of Chair**

Councillor Adam Weber nominated Councillor Richard Small, seconded by Councillor Liz Woodus, all other Councillors agreed. Councillor Richard Small was voted chair.

**Minute 2 (2025/26) To Receive the Chair's Declaration of Acceptance of Office**

This was signed.

**Minute 3 (2025/26) Apologies for Absence**

None

**Minute 4 (2025/26) Public Participation**

Sissinghurst Court

A resident spoke about some issues they have experienced in their building with the car park door being broken.

Streetwatch

Charley from Streetwatch gives an update – they have around 17 volunteers now, crime is really low and there's nothing major to report. Streetwatch has been going for around six years now.

**Minute 5 (2025/26) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations**

None Declared.

**Minute 6 (2025/26) Report from the Borough Councillors**

None present.

**Minute 7 (2025/26) To Decide Whether to Elect a Vice Chair**

Councillor S Halford nominated Councillor M Small. All other Councillors agree to this.

**Minute 8 (2025/26) To Agree Dates of Council Meetings for the Year**

The proposed schedule of Parish Council meetings and working groups was agreed. Meetings will be held at 6.30pm in Dickens Heath Library, and there will be no set meetings in August or December. It was agreed that the meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of each month.

**Minute 9 (2025/26) To Resolve Whether to Establish any Committees or Advisory Groups**

It was agreed to continue with the current committees. Communications and Events, and Finance and Risk.

Planning advisory group

Collaborative working group for PAG will be appointed by the current PAG when the time is right.

**Minute 10 (2025/26) To Appoint Representatives to Sit on Outside Bodies**

Solihull Area Meeting

Councillors Holloway and Taylor agree to be the representatives for this, all Councillors agree with this.

**Minute 11 (2025/26) Civility and Respect Pledge**

All agree to this, all Councillors will email the Clerk with their agreement.

**Minute 12 (2025/26) Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

Proposed by Councillor Maureen Holloway, seconded by Councillor Vicky Taylor, it was **Resolved** that the minutes be approved as a true and accurate record.

### **Minute 13 (2025/26) Parish Council Decisions**

Large projector screen – all agree to this at £698.02

Increase in Councillor allowances – six Councillors against this. Councillor Mike Small abstains.

### **Minute 14 (2025/26) Finance and Risk Committee Update**

Standing Orders – All Councillors agree to the revised version of this.

Financial Regulations – All Councillors agree to the revised version of this.

Risk Assessment & Management Document 2025/26 – All Councillors agree to the revised version of this.

Dignity at Work Policy – All Councillors agree to the revised version of this.

### **Minute 15 (2025/26) Communication and Events Committee**

We have had some successful events already this year with the Easter Egg Hunt and VE Day celebrations. We have more coming up. Councillor Richard Small thanks everyone who has been involved with the events for their help.

Councillor Richard Small suggests that we test the new PA system on the Village Green to make sure the sound quality is good enough, he proposes a good day for this would be the 18<sup>th</sup> of July when the kids break up. Councillor Weber abstains, all other Councillors agree to this.

The Committee would like a bigger budget of £5500 for this year only. £1500 of this is from donation now received so cost to the Council is £500. All Councillors agree to the budget being £500 extra.

There is a vote on whether to have the brass band in attendance, five Councillors voted for this, two against, it is agreed that we will have the brass band for the summer fun day.

### **Minute 16 (2025/26) Actions from the Minutes of the previous meeting – Clerk's update**

Clerk updates about Louis from the Youth Club, who also works with young offenders coming to do some work in the village. They are planning to help with an issue raised by a resident about part of the canal that is beautiful but has got so overgrown that the elderly residents can't sit and watch the boats passing. There is a discussion about CCTV and Charley will pass on the details for a contact who deals with different types of CCTV for advice.

### **Minute 17 (2025/26) Planning Applications**

None to consider

### **Minute 18 (2025/26) To Consider Village Areas of Interest**

Main Street – We want to hold a public consultation to discuss the future of Main Street, to get public opinion on the idea of pedestrianisation. All Councillors agree to this approach.

Christmas Lights - Councillor Taylor has received a quote from Solihull Council to use the electricity on the islands for the Christmas lights, it was extremely high. She is going to look at alternative options.

#### Noticeboard

Councillor Taylor has already cleaned the noticeboard and it looks a bit better, she is going to do it again with a pressure washer.

#### Library

Councillor Mike Small is trying to get an appointment with Kate Bunting at Solihull Council to discuss the Library closures and staffing issues. He would like to increase the Library budget to £700. All Councillors agree to this.

#### IT Platform Update

Councillor Taylor is going to make a video to show everyone how to access their new email addresses. Councillor Weber will do some training on how to use the new system. The next thing to be updated will be the website.

#### Village Hall

The board are working hard to turn the Village Hall around. The new Administrator is settling in well.

### **Minute 19 (2025/26) Financial Matters**

#### **Extra payments received, needing approval:**

1. Proposed by Councillor Mike Small, seconded by Councillor Liz Woodus, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the May 13<sup>th</sup> 2025 Agenda be approved – 23 payments totalling £7,982.31 (this included additional payments of £1,000.00 to the Sharmanaires for the VE Day music, £55.99 to H. Raithby for ink cartridges and £22.93 to M. Holloway for compost).
2. Report on the Finances of the Council  
The first instalment of the precept has been received from Solihull Council, reserves of £70,022 were brought forward from 2024/25, and there is currently a surplus of £104,000.
3. Internal Audit for 2024/25  
This went well, the internal auditor signed the Internal Audit Report on the AGAR.

#### **Minute 20 (2025/26) Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024/25**

1. The Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 was approved, and signed by the Chair and Clerk.
2. The Annual Accounting Statements 2024/25 were approved, and signed by the Chair and RFO.

#### **Minute 21 (2025/26) To Receive any Reports from Councillors who have attended any outside groups or events:**

Councillor Holloway updated about a planning application that was raised at the last Solihull Area Meeting which related to a wooden windmill, the only one of its kind in Europe. This was approved at that meeting, and they were going to do a side letter. This is worrying from a planning perspective as they are likely to approve others if one of this nature is approved. Councillor Holloway also attended Tidbury Green Parish Council's meeting which was extremely busy due to the planning issues.

#### **Minute 22 (2025/26) Correspondence**

The Clerk gave an overview of correspondence received since the last meeting.

#### **Minute 23 (2025/26) Items for next agenda**

Annual Increment pay award for Clerk.

**Meeting ended 9pm**

**Next Meeting : Tuesday June 10th 2025: 6.30pm in Dickens Heath Library**