The Parish Council of Dickens Heath

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday October 13th 2026

Present:

Dickens Heath Parish Councillors; Vicky Taylor(chair), Andy Cardoza, Liz Woodus, Jim Harte, Maureen Holloway.

Charly Slater from Solihull Council Youth Provision

Clerk: Ms H Raithby

Three members of the public

Minute 72 (2026/27) Apologies for Absence
Councillors Stewart Halford and Adam Weber

Minute 73 (2026/27) Public Participation
Charly from Solihull Council's Youth Provision spoke about the summer activities that happened in the area, they were a great success. Winnr Sports have now finished their Youth Club at the Hub as it wasn't attracting enough people. There will be a new club starting provided by Gaia and Strike 9, this should be starting at half term with an opening event on the 26th of October. There will need to be a charge of around £2 for those attending as, although the Parish Council is still contributing for the hire of the hall, Solihull Council have no funding for this anymore. They would like the Parish Council to consider contributing more money to the Youth Club so that they can have the school hall alongside the hall at the hub which is already available to them. Councillor Taylor advises on the process for asking for grant funding and the Clerk will provide Charly with the relevant grant request form. Charly advised that there will be a visit from the Youth Bus again on Halloween night between 6-8pm with youth workers who will be able to do some activities including spooky face painting. It is agreed that Councillors Harte and Holloway will speak to Alison McGrory at Solihull Council about the issues with funding for the Youth club.

Minute 74 (2026/27) Declarations of Interest/Requests for Dispensations
None

Minute 75 (2026/27) To Receive a Report from the Borough Councillors
None in attendance

Minute 76 (2026/27) To Receive an update from the Planning Advisory Group
Councillor Harte provided an update following a meeting with representatives from Hockley Heath, Wythall, Tanworth-in-Arden and Cheswick Green Parish Councils regarding the proposed formation of a joint planning forum.The group discussed ways of protecting the Green Belt.
The draft Terms of Reference had been circulated, and other Parish Councils had suggested that these be shortened and made more concise.
The group had also discussed the potential preparation of a holistic, area-wide plan and a possible budget of £2,000. The involvement of Jean Walters as an adviser had been discussed as an alternative to commissioning external planning consultants.
The possibility of a Ward Councillor chairing the group was discussed, and Richard Holt had agreed to take on this role, with Roy Eady of Tanworth in Arden Parish Council acting as Vice-Chair. The next meeting is due to take place on 24 November.
There had also been discussion regarding the involvement of Parish Clerks. Councillor Harte had not yet discussed this with the Dickens Heath Parish Clerk. Councillor Harte considered that maintaining the same representatives at meetings would provide useful continuity.
The possibility of inviting additional Parish Councils to participate was also discussed. Overall, the meeting was considered positive.

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It was agreed that an item regarding a potential £2,000 allocation for the planning forum would be included on the November agenda for consideration.
Planning responses submitted since the previous meeting included BL1, PL/2026/07759, Birchy Leasowes, the Mayoral planning process and a request for a business case for Whitlocks End Station. These letters were agreed by all members of the Council.

Minute 77 (2026/27) To Consider Planning Applications

PL/2026/01733/MINFHO – 53 Birchy Leasowes Close – Councillors considered the application and agreed that the Parish Council had no objection, noting that the proposal was at ground-floor level and was not considered to adversely affect neighbouring properties.

Minute 78 (2026/27) Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on September 8th 2026

Councillor Liz Woodus proposed, and Councillor Jim Harte seconded, all in favour, the minutes are approved.

Minute 79 (2026/27) Parish Council Decisions

Parish Council Principles of Good Practice Including Member and Officer Protocol
All Councillors agreed to adopt this protocol.
Outstanding Balance for Summer Flower Displays – Councillors agreed to pay £3,630.45, being the outstanding balance of £3,870.45 less £200+VAT. It was also agreed to provide feedback requesting more heat-resistant planting for future summer displays.
Solar Christmas Trees
All Councillors agreed to the plan to have solar Christmas Trees in the village again this year, since we have been told we aren't able to have the usual displays on the lighting columns by Solihull Council. The solar trees will be spread around the village.
CCTV
All agreed to discuss this at the next meeting as Councillor Halford is away and he has been looking into this.
Electric Vehicle Charging
It was decided that we won't be pursuing having electric charging points in our car park at the moment. Councillors felt that the residents would prefer to keep as many spaces as possible as this would mean losing three normal spaces for two electric spaces. Councillors agree to revisit this if there are any requests as we haven't been asked so far.
Playground Swings
A resident has requested that we consider changing one of the swings to an accessible one. Councillors supported the proposal in principle. The indicative cost was approximately £1,680.
Playground Repairs
The bridge repair of £453.36 was agreed by all Councillors
Planning Partnership for Neighbouring Parish Councils
It was agreed that the Parish Council would like to join this group to work collaboratively with other Parish Councils. It was agreed that Maureen Holloway and Jim Harte would represent us at these meetings.
Terms of Reference Planning Advisory Group
All agreed to the new Terms of Reference.
Updated Payroll Contract as of April 1st 2027
All agreed to the updated payroll contract and feel it is good value for money.
Updated Financial Regulations
All agreed to the updates.
Budget & Precept Policy
All agreed to the updated policy.
Temporary Extra Hours for Clerk
The Council discussed the additional responsibilities being undertaken by the Clerk and the increased workload generated by the Planning Advisory Group. It was noted that the current workload was not sustainable within the Clerk's contracted hours. Councillor Taylor requested that the Clerk provide a proposal, supported by timesheets, for consideration by the Council.

Minute 80 (2026/27) Finance and Risk Working Group

A recommendation from the internal audit was that each payment has the legal power used listed. We are putting together a document for publication that will cover all items of

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expenditure. If we have any new items it will be reviewed each year. We are also working on a subject access request policy and data map and putting together a three year budget. Next meeting 8th December 10.30am.

Minute 81 (2026/27) Communications and Events Working Group

Christmas Lights Switch on – This will be on the 4th of December this year, the school choir are booked already. We will book the Grinch and Elf to come and see the children after the choir. It was agreed to ask Tesco to donate some mince pies and mulled wine for the event. We need to buy a new set of lights for the tree, all agree to this.

Christmas lights competition will be running again this year, it will only be for people who submit their own houses this time. It was agreed that Councillor Taylor will organise asking the school about the children making decorations for the tree.

It was agreed that the Communication and Events group will put together an infographic for the Planning work the Parish Council are doing.

Remembrance

Solihull Council had advised that professional traffic management would now be required for the road closures. A provider had been identified at a cost of £540, which was approved by the Council. The Clerk had also received an unsolicited quote from Solihull Council's preferred provider at a substantially higher cost. Councillors discussed concerns about the financial impact of the new requirement on smaller parish councils.

Councillor Holloway suggested increasing the donation to Royal British Legion to £200, everyone agreed to this. There was a discussion about who we would like to do the readings for the service and which Councillors are able to volunteer to help with the service. Councillors Halford, Taylor, Woodus, Holloway agree to help. We have had a suggestion from Borough Councillor Ken Hawkins who received a comment from a resident to ask for Tesco to be closed for the service to stop the noise from cars from disrupting the service. It is discussed and decided that this will not help as it's usually people who don't realise the service is happening that drive down. Instead it is agreed to have some volunteers in high vis jackets on each of the non closed roads to just politely let drivers know what is happening and ask them if they would mind using a different route or waiting a little while as it is only a short service. We will trial this and see if it helps and then review it for next year. There is a discussion about closing the roads in the area but this would be a lot more complicated and expensive unfortunately.

Minute 82 (2026/27) Councillors' Action Log and Clerk's Update

Car Park

We have had some complaints about the car park and the disabled spaces. It was agreed that the Parish Council car park should provide three disabled parking spaces and that these should be repainted, with appropriate signage installed. It was also agreed that double yellow lines would be painted on both sides of the entrance. Once the works had been completed, Solihull Council would be approached regarding possible parking enforcement.

Minute 83 (2026/27) To Consider Village Areas of Interest

Halloween

We have managed to organise for the police to attend and the Youth Bus will be visiting as well.

Village Hall

The Village Hall had asked whether the volunteer group could assist with repainting the hall and carrying out some additional maintenance tasks. Councillors agreed that the request could be put to the volunteer group.

Islands

Each month the volunteer group do some maintenance to the islands.

Gate at Waterside

This is still open for everyone to use, we haven't heard anything more.

Minute 84 (2026/27) Financial Matters

Proposed by Councillor Maureen Holloway, seconded by Councillor Jim Harte, **Resolved** that the payments in Appendix I of the October 13th agenda be approved - 22 payments totalling

£15591.85 including extra payments of £816 to Countrywide for clearance of the Car Park, £432.00 to Countrywide for felling a dead tree on the Village Green, £6960.00 to David Ogilvie Engineering for the New Benches and £211.80 to H Raithby for Remembrance Day Printing.

The report for the finances of the Parish Council was received and approved by all Councillors. Councillor Taylor requested that variances are differentiated in the report, green for favourable, red for adverse.

There will be money moved from our CIL money to cover the benches and laptops, totalling £5800 for the benches and £1200 for laptops.

Minute 85 (2026/27) Correspondence

Correspondence is discussed.

Minute 86 (2026/27) Items For Next Agenda

- £2000 allocation for Planning forum
- Youth Provision

Meeting ended 8.18pm

<u>Next Meeting</u>: November 10th 2026: 6.30pm in the Library

Signature……. Date…….