

Sydenham Damerel Parish Meeting
Thursday 16th January 2025
7pm St. Mary's Sydenham Damerel

Agenda (*issued in advance on 8 January 2025 by posting on Sydenham Damerel Parish Council Notice Boards, circulated through parish e-mail distribution list and hard copy delivered by hand*)

- 1) *Review and approval of Annual Parish Meeting Minutes of the 30th of May 2024*
 - a) *Update on the status of actions arising.*
- 2) *Update on the status of the Governance Review*
 - a) *The transition from the Parish Council to the Parish Meeting will require the assets and bank account to be transferred to the Parish Meeting.*
 - b) *The role of the Chairman, is a clerk required?*
 - c) *Gaining involvement in the activities of the Parish Meeting – any volunteers?*
- 3) *Budget Discussion*
 - a) *The 2024/25 budget covered the following items:*
 - i) *Maintenance of parish assets*
 - (1) *Defibrillators*
 - (2) *Notice boards*
 - (3) *Benches*
 - ii) *Sydenham Damerel Parish Council website*
 - iii) *Meeting fees*
 - iv) *Public liability insurance*
 - v) *Other Items*
 - b) *The Parish Council's bank account has a healthy balance. Are there any big-ticket items that should be considered?*
 - i) *A grant from the Parish Council towards the cost of the "Heating & Seating" project in St Mary's. This project is for the benefit of the whole community as it will improve the facility of our only communal space for events as well as worship.*

Minutes

Attendees:

Cllr. Neil Jory (Chair SDPC and WDBC Councillor Milton Ford Ward, including
Sydenham Damerel)

20 parishioners

Apologies:

Cllr. Chris Edmunds (SDPC and WDBC councillor Tamar Side Ward)

Cllr. Lois Samuels (SDPC and DCC councillor Okehampton Rural)

1) Review and approval of Annual Parish Meeting Minutes of the 30th of May 2024

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 30 May 2024 were formally approved (copy of the approved minutes attached)

a) Update on the status of actions arising

Update on progress of Governance Review (Neil Jory) – This update was deferred to agenda item 2.

SDPC Bank account signatories (Neil Jory) – Completion of this action is delayed owing to the somewhat tortuous TSB bank approval process. The on-line system has not worked, and a hard copy of the draft signature change mandate has now been sent to the former parish clerk. Neil Jory will visit to collect the form.

Action continues: Neil Jory

Parishioner ideas for spending the parish reserve (now approaching £6,000). This action continues.

Action continues: All parishioners

Defibrillator maintenance – the maintenance of the defibs has been carried out during the last year and the cost refunded (note: the refund came from the pocket of the chair owing to the delay to bank signatory changes, refund will take place once the bank issue is resolved).

List of items on which a Parish Meeting can spend money. The chair reported that there does not seem to be a definitive list available, but a Parish Meeting appears to be able to spend its money on the same items as a parish council. A Parish Meeting may not spend its money on purchase of land but just on maintenance.

Action: Complete

SDPC meeting schedule – The chair reported that no SDPC meetings had taken place in the past year. This is an unsatisfactory situation, and the chair apologised for the failure. He added that the interim councillors appointed by WDBC following the disqualification of the previous council, (*ironically for failure to hold the required meetings*), were just placeholders pending the establishment of the SD Parish Meeting as a replacement for SDPC. The chair undertook to schedule four SDPC meetings for 2025.

Action continues: Neil Jory

Horsebridge noticeboard repair has not been completed but the chair agreed to liaise with Neil martin to ensure that this action can be completed without further delay.

Action continues: Neil Jory and Neil Martin

Footpath from Townlake to Horsebridge – The situation has not improved, in fact is now worse owing to a fallen tree across the path. The chair will now address with urgency.

Action continues: Neil Jory

Jane Franklin mentioned that two footpath signs, one near Derriton and the other opposite Olive House at Lane End (both ends of the same footpath) had been knocked over. The chair will organise their re-erection.

Action: Neil Jory

Communication using e-mail to notify of parish affairs. This action has been completed, and the last leaflet drop took place with the distribution of the agenda for this meeting. All future parish notification will be by posting on the SDPC notice boards and circulation through the SD parish e-mail distribution. Parishioners are urged to encourage all residents to join the e-mail distribution list.

Potholes – Situation remains a major problem, and new potholes have been identified (e.g. at the hilltop entrance to Townlake). The chair advised that potholes are the responsibility of DCC and there is an online process for reporting which all parishioners are encouraged to use. Given the gravity of the situation in SD parish Neil Jory will invite the new Highways Officer from DCC to visit in SD and around the Milton Ford Ward.

Action Continues : Neil Jory

Lamerhooe Broadband – This issue continues to frustrate. Neil Jory reported that meetings have taken place recently with CDS (Matt Barrow) but there is a limited amount WDBC can achieve with this Devon and Somerset County Council sponsored group. Neil Jory will however continue to press for a satisfactory solution. Peter Hurdwell advised that the campaign continues. WDBC and CDS have offered the required funding (£25k) but according to BDUK this funding cannot be used owing to state aid / public procurement rules. This stance has been strongly challenged in writing, and a response is awaited from Department of Science, Innovation and Technology / BDUK. There is also active support from Sir Geoffrey Cox MP to the campaign. Peter Hurdwell further reported that the 11 pointless telegraph poles erected by CDS / Airband at Collacombe remain unused despite advance warnings from the SD Community Fibre Partnership that they duplicated the BDUK public funded Openreach network. This appears to demonstrate a shocking waste of money under the noses of government financed / managed bodies. The cost of these useless poles, soon to be demolished, would more than cover the funding required to connect Lamerhooe where serviceable poles are already in place.

This action from the Parish Meeting will be closed but a watching brief will be followed for future meetings.

Action closed watching brief only

2) Update on the status of the Governance Review

The chair reported that approval of the Secretary of State is required for the transition to a Parish Meeting. The failure of the WDBC legal team to act in accordance with their commitments as recorded in the notes of the special meeting held at WDBC offices on 17 December is regrettable. Peter Hurdwell stated that it was also unfortunate that the WDBC legal team did not appear to have prepared for the meeting and this has been manifested by the failure to meet the target start date of 1 April 2025 for the formal transition to the SD Parish Meeting.

a) The transition from the Parish Council to the Parish Meeting will require the assets and bank account to be transferred to the Parish Meeting.

No progress has been made on this, and the action continues with the WDBC legal team. The chair will liaise with WDBC legal to try to hasten the process.

Action: Neil Jory

b) The role of the Chairman, is a clerk required?

No clerk is required for a Parish Meeting, but the basic tasks are still required and may be taken on by the chairman or another volunteer as appropriate.

c) Gaining involvement in the activities of the Parish Meeting – any volunteers?

John Hearn reiterated the call for active parish volunteers. None were forthcoming at the meeting, but the call remains.

Action: All Parishioners

3) Budget Discussion

a) The 2024/25 budget covered the following items:

- i) Maintenance of parish assets**
 - (1) Defibrillators**
 - (2) Notice boards**
 - (3) Benches**
- ii) Sydenham Damerel Parish Council website**
- iii) Meeting fees**
- iv) Public liability insurance**
- v) Other Items**

The Chair reported that the precept of circa £600 for fiscal year 2024 included the following:

- DALC membership £75
- Information Commission registry £35
- Website £80
- Maintenance of assets £120
- Newsletter £75
- Insurance £158
- Admin £50

Mike Forster said that better provision is required to cover maintenance of defibrillators. After some discussion it was proposed that an additional sum should be included in future precept of £250 per year. It was also advised that if a defib was used then it would cost around £300 for replacement of pads and batteries and recommissioning. This fortunately has not happened to date, although there was one false alarm recently at Horsebridge. Sufficient financial reserves will be necessary to ensure this eventuality can be accommodated.

Action: Neil Jory

The lack of replacement signatories for the bank account raises some serious issues. One important question being whether the insurance premium for this year had been paid. The chair will investigate

Action: Neil Jory

- b) The Parish Council's bank account has a healthy balance (circa £6,000). Are there any big-ticket items that should be considered?**
- i) A grant from the Parish Council towards the cost of the "Heating & Seating" project in St Mary's. This project is for the benefit of the whole community as it will improve the facility of our only communal space for events as well as worship.**

Mike Forster stated that we have defibs at Sydenham Damerel and Horsebridge but, although a site and a power source had been kindly offered by Peter Windmer, there was still no unit installed at Townlake. The total cost for a new unit (Circa £1200) with cabinet (circa £500) with installation would be around £2,000. It was agreed by the meeting that this would be a sensible procurement. Acquisition depends on establishment of control of the bank account.

Action: Neil Jory and Mike Forster

John Hearn raised the subject of the St. Mary's Heating and Seating Fund which is aimed at enhancing the comfort and facilities at St. Mary's as the only community building in the parish for a wide range of activities. Fund raising has already commenced and eight folding tables and four overhead heaters have already been purchased. Further funds are required for mounting the heaters on the walls, the acquisition of two more heaters and a substantial number of stacking seats. It was agreed by the meeting that this is a worthwhile project, and

the Friends of St. Mary's (FOSM chaired by Mike Forster) were asked to submit an application/ justification for a grant.

Action: FOSM / Mike Forster

Other Business

Concerns were raised, by Horsebridge residents specifically, regarding blocked drains which were causing flooding. Indeed, this issue, along with potholes and damaged verges, is a generally worsening problem in the parish. The chair advised that as he had previously mentioned this is a Devon County Council issue and he was organising for the new Devon County Highways Officer to visit the ward as soon as possible to survey all the highway problems and establish a plan for rectification.

Action: Neil Jory

The meeting was closed at 7.45pm