

Sydenham Damerel Annual Parish Meeting

Minute No 114

Thursday 20th March 2023 held at St Mary's Church, Sydenham Damerel

These Minutes are provisional until they are signed by the Chair at the next Annual Parish Meeting

Meeting opened at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs N. Pratten and S Miller, Cllr Neil Jory, WDBC, Darryl White and Kathy, WDBC Democratic Services and 22 parishioners.

1. Cllr Pratten offered be the Chair for the meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Miller.
2. The Chair welcomed everyone to the annual parish meeting and to St Mary's Church. The Chair introduced Cllr Jory, Leader of WDBC and Darryl White and Kathy from WDBC Democratic Services. Cllr Pratten also outline the agenda for the evening.
3. Apologise were received from Cllr Windemer, Mr and Mrs Hartop, Mr Hearn and Mrs Orme.
4. The Chair gave a brief resume of some of the more notable events that the Parish Council have been involved with since the last Annual Parish Meeting.

Positives - Helping to fund the 2nd defibrillator for the parish. Organising CPR / defibrillator training course which was well attended. A reduced precept was set. There was positive feedback regarding the parish newsletters regarding information from WDBC and updates. A grant was made towards upkeep of the church Grounds. A bench, kindly donated by John Bertram, has been sited to the North of the village. Cllr Miller took on the role of Snow Warden and co-ordinated additional salt supplies for the parish with stocks located across the parish. A small grant was made to the committee organising the Coronation celebrations.

Negatives - The lack of councillors with only 3 in position out of a possible 7, all 3 to stand down at the May local election. Poor / slow communication with Devon County Council & Devon Highways regarding ongoing problems with blocked drains at Derriton Cross, the collapsed culvert above Derriton Cross and continuing flooding at Lane End. Devon Highways have agreed to repairs but due to limited funding this is a low priority with any repairs to major roads taking precedent. The Chair thanked Jane Franklin for her exceptional efforts picking up litter in the parish.

5. Speakers - update on the Governance Review. Cllr Neil Jory introduced himself and gave a description of his remit within West Devon Borough Council. He said that everyone should be aware of the current situation following a letter to households from WDBC and an unbiased flyer produced within the parish. Neil stated that whilst the current system may be deemed to be 'old fashioned' he approves of the way the Parish Council mechanism works. He reminded everyone that the WDBC website had a webpage for all to give feedback that would be considered during the review period following the close of the response page. Neil confirmed that there were 3 possible outcomes to the Review. a) Continue with the current setup by getting parishioners to put themselves forward to stand as councillors. b) Adoption of the Parish Meeting format with an annual meeting. c) Join with adjoining parishes to form a grouped parish council with decisions made by a broad representation.

As no candidates have put themselves forward in the parish there will be no local election in Sydenham Damerel on 4th May 2023.

Darryl White introduced himself and outlined the timescale for the Governance Review. A petition was submitted in September 2022 and this was considered at a full WDBC meeting in

February 2023. WDBC have a maximum of 12 months to make a decision. Parishioners can give feedback until 14th June 2023 and the Governance Review will be considered at the full WDBC meeting in July. (WDBC will absorb the full cost of the Review). A Hub Advisory Group, (an informal working group), is to be set up at the next WDBC meeting at the end of May. Darryl advised that the Governance Review is currently in the early stages of the process.

Tim Thacker suggested that there would be significant savings if the Parish Meetings model was adopted due to there being no need to employ a parish clerk. Denise Head raised the point that she had been unpaid as the parish clerk for many years until a paid clerk was appointed. Margaret Hurdwell added that the parish had been given poor advice in the past that had said it was 'a requirement to have a paid clerk' and that several councillors had resigned over the matter.

Sarah Gillett asked why is the Governance Review was taking so long as feelings within the Parish had surely been made clear by way of the local petition.

Neil and Darryl responded to questions put to them and made it clear that time is needed to review the process and be sure that the right decision is finally made and that a transparent and democratic structure is in place.

Sarah Gillett asked why the Parish Meeting model cannot be adopted right away since it is truly democratic.

Tim Thacker commented that surely it was clear that the bureaucracy involved is frustrating for all concerned.

Cllr Pratten asked Neil to confirm the makeup of the committee if the Parish Meetings model was adopted. Would the committee have a clerk and a paid Proper Officer from WDBC. Neil Jory confirm that the Proper Officer would be a council employee who would carry out liaison work as part of their job role at WDBC. (There is no requirement for a Parish Meeting to have a clerk or take minutes).

The Chair encouraged anyone who has not yet provided feedback to WDBC to do so.

6. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 2021 were read out by the Chair. There were no objections. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Pratten, seconded by Sarah Gillett. The minutes are available on the SDPC website.
7. The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 2022 were read out by the Chair. There were no objections. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Pratten, seconded by Margaret Hurdwell. The minutes are available on the SDPC website.
8. There were no further questions raised during the parishioners' open forum.
9. The Chair thanked Cllr Miller for taking notes, Mike Forster for his continuing work monitoring the defibrillators in Sydenham Damerel and Horsebridge and Neil Jory, Darryl White and Kathy for attending this evening. The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed at 8.04pm.