

**DIPTFORD PARISH COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING - HELD AT DIPTFORD PARISH HALL TQ9 7NY**

**ON TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025 @ 7.00pm**

**Present** – Cllr S Franklin (Chair), Cllr S Parker-Davidson (Vice Chair), Cllr T Crocker, Cllr L Lethbridge, Cllr G Paterson, Cllr C Peach, Cllr S Hill, Cllr L Carroll, C Cllr D Thomas, D Cllr D Hancock.

**In Attendance** – 1 member of the Public.

**Apologies for Absence** – none received.

**1. Chairmans report – Cllr S Franklin**

Once again, we have experienced a challenging year for Diptford Parish Council.

As usual, your Council has dealt with a number of Planning Applications, some of which have proved contentious, but it has been disappointing to see no movement whatsoever on the long promised additional properties which were to include much needed ‘affordable’ housing, have still not been delivered. In face we do not now know who actually owns the site. Planning remains frustrating, and of course the Parish Council is merely a statutory consultee in the process.

The Playing Field again has seen our biggest challenge. Having previously spent an unbudgeted large amount on Health & Safety grounds to make safe the Monterey Pine at the entrance of the field, following further catastrophic failure and a further annual safety survey carried out on this tree, there was no option but to arrange for the removal of most of the tree. Disappointing though it is to remove any elderly tree, threats to safety of the public are paramount. This led to another large spend which could have been prevented had the tree been removed the previous year. This has stretched the meagre resources of the Council.

On the bright side, we are delighted that the aging tennis court has now been transformed into a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which we know will be a huge asset to the community for years to come. Funding for this has come via some generous donations, and also by encouraging parishioners to use Easy Fundraising when they shop, and by registering for Gift Aid so that charitable donations to the Amenity Trust can benefit. Special thanks to Lucy Carroll who is taking a break from Council duties, without whose boundless enthusiasm and energy I am sure these improvements would still be awaited.

I would like to thank all Councillors for their willingness to put themselves forward for the good of the community in which we live, and we have been pleased to welcome one new Councillor to Diptford PC this year, namely Gavin Patterson, a long time local resident. Thanks too to Ralph Mortimore, our village ‘odd job man’ who is so much more than just that.

I would also like to thank our now retired Parish Clerk, Ali Kohler, the work she has done on behalf of the Parish Council, in particular pointing us in the direction of fundraising opportunities of which we would have previously been unaware.

I am delighted to welcome tonight our new Parish Clerk, Sharon Raggett, whom we are all looking forward to working with. She will be taking over the clerk@diptfordparishcouncil.org email, so the changeover will be seamless.

We continue to have been well supported too by Dan Thomas, our County Councillor, and Guy Pannell and David Hancock, our two District Councillors, all of whom have generously provided us with Locality funding when requested.

Disappointing that there has been no delivery of fibre broadband in the Parish despite promises from Connecting Devon & Somerset that this will happen.

## **2. County Cllr's Report – Cllr D Thomas reported -**

Budget - County has agreed its budget for 2025/26 which includes the usual 2.99% rise in council tax plus the extra 2% for integrated care.

The annual council tax for an average Band D home will rise by £85.59 – or £1.64 a week – to £1,801.26.

Local Government Reorganisation: - March 21st was the deadline for submitting interim plans for LGR and it appears that Plymouth City Council wants to take over the 13 parishes to the west of the South Hams (currently in Rebecca Smith MP's South West Devon constituency). It makes no mention of the rest of the county.

The Districts have offered a 1:4:5 unitary solution

4= West Devon, South Hams, Teignbridge and Torbay.

5= Torridge, North Devon, Mid Devon, East Devon, Exeter

1= Plymouth

County have proposed 5 different options including the 1:4:5 as well as other options, including 2 areas – Plymouth and the rest of Devon. Torbay have also presented more than 1 option, including the 1:4:5 model but also a proposal for a Greater Torbay. Exeter City Council is lobbying for a Greater Exeter.

It is worth remembering that the 'rules' as set out were to follow the district boundaries (and therefore use District areas as the building blocks) as well as ensuring plans did not leave any of the area out. Neither Plymouth nor Exeter appear to be following these rules.

At the same time, Devon, Torbay and Torbay leaders are having discussions about establishing a mayoral strategic authority (which they ultimately hope that Cornwall will be persuaded - or compelled - to join).

Potholes and road maintenance - This continues to be a massive issue across the county and although we have worked collaboratively together over the course of the last year, it is clear that we are only applying sticking plasters on what are effectively broken limbs. In the event that control of the council changes hands, I will be advocating that the road maintenance contract is brought back in house where it can be more effectively managed and costed.

In the meantime, I am continuing to fight for a stop sign, double yellows, roundels near the school and an extension to the 20mph zone, with varying degrees of success. This very much remains an ongoing project.

Locality - This year, I have been pleased to support the Parent and Toddler group with £570 towards hall hire and the PC with £500 towards the resurfacing of the tennis court.

### **3. District Cllrs' Report – Cllr D Hancock –**

Local government finance – rural service grant which comes from main government to SHDC has been cut, this will mean more savings will need to be made. Not much else has been going on at Council because of County elections coming up on the 1<sup>st</sup> May.

Road sweeping in the South Hams – roads in Diptford are on the list but the sweeper is behind schedule because of staff sickness which means that sweeper staff are deployed to refuse collection duties and not operating the sweeper, staff are now back at work and sweeper duties are re-starting.

### **4. Short Mat Bowls – Cllr S Parker-Davidson –**

The Club celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year, 4 new players have started this year, the Club played in the Winter Season League and did well for a small club.

### **5. Ladybirds.**

As many know last May Diptford W. I. left the W.I. and became a women's group called Ladybirds. A name which took us a long time to come up with!

We have now successfully completed our first year. It has been an exciting year and our membership has stayed at 24 even though we lost three members through passing away, more have joined. It has made the meetings much more relaxed with not being tied to the rigours of W.I. and gives us more time to get to know each other. We have had speakers on various topics, craft evenings, a puzzle competition, film night to name but a few, and have eaten lots of cake!!

We have been out to the house of marbles and painting at China Blue. Also to Strawberry Fields at Buckfastleigh, Station Hotel South Brent, and Bruto Lounge in Totnes for coffee mornings. We ran a coffee morning for Macmillan which raised about £200, and joined one for RDA at Buckfastleigh. The Soup and Cake lunch in the village went well and the Advent Fair was very well attended by the village. Both of which enabled us to raise just over £1000 for the Amenity Trust. Look out for a village cream tea in August!!

This year we decided to move to afternoon meetings for the winter starting at 2.30 and then return to the evenings from April. This seems to have worked well for our members, and in order to incorporate members who work we have instigated pub evenings once a month at the Avon Inn. As you can see we do like our food! Altogether it has been quite a successful year and we hope to go on from strength to strength.

## **6. FODS – Cllr L Carroll -**

In 2024 FODS raised £5,000 and funded – Outdoor Learning, IPADS, Trips and Events to the Aquarium, Stover Country Park, Tamar Bridge, Drumming Workshop, bought new class books, class enrichment, PE Kits, New Slide, Book Bags, Year 6 leavers books & made improvements to the Library Spare and shared areas in the School.

## **7. Amenity Trust (Playing Field) –**

Over the year the playing fields continue to see regular use by locals across a wide age group.

This year's maintenance has seen the activity frame legs replaced with significant galvanised supports to increase its life. The brambles have been cleared from many areas and the bamboo cut back and treated to prevent future growth. Many tree branches have been cut back to improve light levels, safety or reduce hanging. Preparations for a face lift of the BBQ area in 2025 has started with removal of weeds and cutting back local bushing. The ball wall has been repaired and the skate area surface has been moss and weed treated.

Damaged fencing, between the entrance gate and the Monterey pine, following the removal of the tree's limbs, has now been replaced. The Playing fields sign is back up and a small notice board will be added for park events.

A significant development in recent months has been the funding, arranging and completion of the tennis court resurfacing. This will include markings for a multi-use activity area to bring a new lease of life together with a table tennis table.

The Parish Walk took place in spring this time, following the cancellation due to flooding in Autumn 2023. Over £100 was raised with 24 attending. This year is planned for 18th May.

As the DPLG is disbanded there are plans for the refreshed Amenity trust to drive forward with future maintenance and also special event days. This will link on the recent tennis court upgrading and refresh of the BBQ area for example. Hopefully, will see more members and participation going forward.

Finally, thanks go to the Amenity Trust / Parish Council for handling the tree cutting, bamboo treating and maintaining grass cutting / tree maintenance.

## **8. St Mary the Virgin Church –**

The Church has 12 regular people attending, the organ and clock currently need attention which is very costly. The graves have now been mapped the oldest being 1725, SHDC are now doing grass cutting, dead tree in the graveyard is being dealt with.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.39pm to be followed by a Parish Council meeting.