



**The Chair of Dymchurch Parish Council hereby summons the members of Dymchurch Parish Council to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held at 7pm Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at the Parish Council Offices Orgarswick Avenue.**

# MINUTES

**In attendance :**

**Cllr. D. Young (Chair)**

**Cllr. C. Young**

**Cllr. C. Cooper**

**Cllr. L. Finch (Vice Chair)**

**Cllr. A. Pegler**

**Cllr. A. Weatherhead**

**Cllr. V. McCreedy**

**Also Present – Mr. J. Lawrence, Parish Clerk**

**Invited Guests:**

**Environment Agency - Rosie Cansdale, Rebecca Skinner, Tea White**

**Southern Water - John Mealey, Nicole McNab**

**District Council Cllrs - Tony Cooper, Tony Hills, Paul Thomas, Stephen Scoffham, Jeremy Speakman**

**Five members of the public.**

**1. APOLOGIES.**

Members are reminded of the need to tender apologies with the reason for absence direct to the Clerk if they are unable to attend.

**Cllr. C. McCreedy**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- a.** To declare any personal interests in items on the agenda and their nature.
- b.** To declare any prejudicial interests in items on the agenda – any councillors with prejudicial interests must leave the room for the relevant items.

No declarations were made.

**3. ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2024**

Minutes of the previous meeting accepted and signed by the chair. Amendment made to add planning application for Deep Dean which was omitted.

- 4. PUBLIC SESSION-**Members of the public are invited to make comments on the below agenda item. No other matters will be accepted for discussion at this meeting but will be noted for future meetings.

It was agreed that members of the public would be permitted to ask questions throughout the meeting as various representatives provided information.

**5. TO CONSIDER RECENT BATHING WATER RESULTS AND THE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.**

Dymchurch beach has reported a significant rise in pollution levels in the bathing water as recorded by the Environment Agency. Members will discuss these findings and the potential impact on the local community due to the effects on the local economy, tourism and users of the beach for recreation.

The Parish Council was pleased to receive a very informative presentation from the Environment Agency which covered a wide area of subjects and indicated that lots of work is being carried out in the background to identify the sources of pollution which is affecting our bathing waters.

Southern Water provided clear evidence that they are working hard to identify the sources of pollution, investigating wrong connections into the sewage system and the potential for contamination from private septic tanks not connected to the mains.

The following is a summary of the evening's discussion. Questions were posed throughout the evening by members of the public and Councillors and these comments and answers have been included in the following.

The meeting discussed the process of collecting and analysing water samples from various locations, with a focus on the challenges and potential improvements in the current system. They also addressed ongoing efforts to monitor and measure water quality in different sections of Kent, including issues with DNA samples, trace pollution, and the impact of farming activities. Lastly, they discussed the need for increased engagement, transparency, and proactive approaches to address these issues, as well as the potential impact of tourism on the local economy.

Issues were raised about the algorithm which is used to classify bathing waters. A request was made to obtain a copy of this algorithm so that locally sourced data could be inputted but there was no clear indication as to where this could be obtained.

However, it was agreed that this algorithm seems to be out of date and needs to be reviewed.

High pollution readings found at Lyndhurst Road Bridge were discussed at length and some concern raised about the discrepancies in levels.

A particular incident at Jesson Outfall was raised by a member of the public reporting raw sewage being seen whilst canoeing.

## **Summary of Actions by Various Agencies**

### **Southern Water**

- **John Mealey** (Southern Water) confirmed that investigations into potential contamination sources in the Dymchurch area are ongoing. He highlighted Southern Water's commitment to exploring options for upgrading outdated septic systems, responding to concerns about their impact on water quality. John is happy to arrange a site tour of West Hythe treatment works for interested parties, aiming to increase transparency and community engagement and, in fact, offered open access to any works being carried out by their organisation.
- **Nicole McNab** (Southern Water) acknowledged the importance of maintaining septic tanks and cesspits, particularly in the area. She is organizing a working group with local community representatives in early September to address these issues and collaborate on solutions.

### **Environment Agency**

- **Rebecca Skinner** (Environment Agency) discussed ongoing efforts to monitor water quality across Kent, including additional investigative sampling in Dymchurch and Littlestone. She recognized the need to review the current bathing water classification algorithm for potential updates, considering the challenges and inconsistencies highlighted during the meeting.
- **Rosie Cansdale** (Environment Agency) focused on the difficulties in addressing different pollution sources, particularly in St. Mary's Bay, and the need to prioritize these challenges due to their impact on the local community. Rosie also confirmed that the Environment Agency is addressing sewage incidents and working to identify the root causes of persistent water quality issues. The incident reported by a member of the public witnessed while canoeing in the Bay will be reviewed.

## Dymchurch Parish Council

- **Dymchurch Parish Council** and District Councillor Pau Thomas raised concerns about the accuracy of the current water classification system and its potential need for modernization. The Council also pointed out discrepancies in water quality testing results and the impact of these issues on the local economy.
- They called for a more proactive approach in providing real-time information to the public and emphasized the importance of transparency and collaboration among all stakeholders.
- They specifically tasked District Councillors to take a proactive approach to support the area with what will be an expected no swim or poor water classification for next season in Dymchurch.

### Tasks and Actions:

- **Rebecca Skinner** will be conducting additional investigative sampling in Dymchurch and Littlestone to identify sources of contamination.
- **Southern Water** will continue investigations into contamination sources in the Dymchurch area and explore options for upgrading outdated septic systems.
- **Environment Agency** will review the current bathing water classification algorithm for potential updates.
- **Nicole McNab** to organize a working group with local community representatives in early September to address ongoing the water quality concerns.
- **John Mealey** will arrange a site tour of West Hythe treatment works to enhance transparency and community engagement if required.

### Future Actions

- **Tony Vaughan MP** to meet with Southern Water in early September to discuss water quality issues and explore possible political actions to address these concerns.
- **Environment Agency** to follow up on reported sewage incidents and continue working to identify and address persistent water quality challenges.
- **Dymchurch Parish Council** to collaborate with agencies, stakeholders and the District Council in developing strategies to mitigate the impact of water quality issues on the local community and economy.
- **District Councillors** to lobby MP to request a review of the outdated algorithm which classifies bathing water quality.

6. Date of next Ordinary Council Meeting- 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024