



## Minutes of the meeting on Monday 16 March 2026 at Pippbrook

The Meeting was conducted by Cllr Margaret Cooksey – with 9 attendees, who were; Cllr Nick Wright, Cllr Stephen Cooksey, Cllr Paula Keay, Rev Anthony Rustell, Rev Nelson Porter, Pat Smith, Andy Tanner, and Pierre Tartari.

**(1) APOLOGIES for ABSENCE;** Cllr David Draper, Cllr Rosemary Hobbs, Margaret Brett, Basil Doha, Andrew Fuller, David Tobitt. and Rev Stephen Richardson.

**(2) MINUTES of FEBRUARY Meeting, and MATTERS ARISING:**

The Minutes were accepted as a true record and signed, with no matters arising.

**(3) POLICE UPDATE;** *No pre-meet response and no attendee.*

**(4) UNITARY DEVOLUTION;** Stephen started his detailed summary with a relevant timeline of events;

- On **09 March**; MVDC in 'Extraordinary' Committee had confirmed the response to the public Consultation, which had been a positive 'Yes' for Parish Councils in; Boxhill, Dorking, and Westcott;
- On **10 March**; Parliament confirmed all legalities for the establishment of new Unitary Authorities;
- On **20 May**; the new 'Shadow' Unitary of East Surrey would have its first meeting, and would function until 01 April 2027;

He then answered questions;

**Nick** asked if the PCs were 'firm'? - Yes, 'established' at the MVDC meet;

**Pat** queried what the voting figures had been as very difficult to find on the MVDC web? - Yes, they were there in 'Council papers' – but, in general, 2-to-1 on a c26% response;

**Nelson** asked what the difference was between 'PC' and 'TC'; in essence only that a TC was, generally, a larger area and could have a Mayor, but was an indicator that a 'TC' did not have any church or faith link;

Nelson also wondered that as this had been voted on a few years ago without success, what would be different this time; the new benefit of having a really 'local' authority with no 'district' council existing;

Nelson also asked how many Councillors would there be; '7' from Dorking North and '7' from Dorking South – and the Holmwoods were excluded;

Nelson then put the question that prompted most discussion; what would DTC be responsible for – to which **Nick** opened with 'allotments' (a statutory responsibility), but that all else was possible – and

**Margaret** and **Stephen** then gave examples of which assets/functions the DTC might take from ESUA;

**Anthony** wondered whether whatever might be agreed prior to May 2027 would be a commitment or maybe adjustable thereafter; Nick, Margaret and Stephen all thought 'adjustable'.

In summing up, Margaret and Nick hoped that public involvement might create a 'menu' of assets and responsibilities to select from – but how to accomplish this was a question we should all think about.

**(5) BID update;** *in Andrew's absence, Paula highlighted;* **(a)** their progress on the '**Handyman Initiative**' – with the eponymous artisan sorting things out in a few shops – as part of their 'Business Support' programme; **(b)** their news on **retail churn...** the Pet Spa and a Filipino gift shop were to open, but 3 were going; Indigo Grey, Monica's Deli, and Clarke's (they are closing 4 others in the area); **(c)** their delight with the wonderful public support for the first '**Festival of Light**' resulting in 150 willow lanterns in a large procession from Dorking Halls into St Martin's – where the church was transformed as the light increased to a musical background – added to with the surge in high-street trade that evening; **(d)** happiness with preparations for the '**Vintage Day**' – sat09may – with V/cars at St M's car park concourse, V/clothes market at King's Arms, and with many shops joining-in, plus street entertainment; and also for **(e)** the '**Hello Dorking Good Living Festival**' (13-27sep) – two weeks of 'Flavour, Fresh Air and Feeling Good' including '**Food and Drink Day**' (sun13sep) with a show-kitchen in St M's Walk, a '**Grape and Grain Trail**' to encourage pub visits, and the '**Walking Festival**' (19-27sep) – and they will be approaching cycle, yoga and



well-being businesses for further events and initiatives; and on **(f) Digital**; Facebook views and interactions increased in February (+17% to 343k) and almost 3,000 interactions - up 53% in the previous month, and Instagram views increased to 180k; and **(g)** the contract for **DISC** is signed, and BID managers and Police will receive training in the next month and the system is expected to be live in the summer heralded by a Business Crime Prevention Event with Surrey Police; **(h)** on **Taxis**, after meeting with MVDC Licensing, the BID have sent a list of taxi companies to them to clarify status (private/Hackney) and then the plan is to advertise identity and booking preferences to make selection and booking easier and safer; and finally but notably **(h)** in the preparatory work for the application for **'Town of Culture'** the survey on which produced almost 200 positive responses, and BID are completing the EOI for 31mar deadline - and are daring to dream!

**(6) TOWN Report**; **Paula** started by; advising **(a)** the **number of retailers** entering or leaving Dorking remains stable, with an average of 11 changes per quarter - a seminar on wed17jun will aim to strengthen MV's visitor economy and will feature a panel of specialists; **(b)** two **Networking Lunches** are scheduled for thu9jul/wed23sep; **(c)** MVDC will consider introducing a **Public Spaces Protection Order** (PSPO) for the A24 Mickleham area, following a public consultation (in which 62% of 900 responses were supportive); **(d)** the **Leatherhead BID** established in Jan 2026 is now in positive collaboration with the Dorking BID, and it is expected that this partnership will continue to grow as both continue to develop their programmes. Pat asked that in view of the MVDC significant hike in Business Rates if it was possible for them to publicise their 'Hardship Reduction' initiative to all retailers?

**(7) TRAFFIC ISSUES**; As John was not present, **Margaret** commented on an email from Chris Heaps (now retired from DTF) asking about the feasibility study that N/Rail were commissioning - and she confirmed that MVDC had been able to part-fund this extra-to-budget item, and it would be starting.

## **(8) MEMBER GROUPS' UPDATES;**

**Circular Dorking**; **Andy** delightedly told of the excellent response to their 'Home Energy Showcase' (Pippbrook - 8 March), and invited entrants for their Quiz night (Java Cafe - 23 March). He added that the 'Library of Things' was being well-used - and they were looking forward to the 'Big Green Week' in June.

**Dorking Society/Museum**; **Pierre** advised all going well, but were waiting for SES to arrive and tear-up their access alley to relay new water pipes for the adjoining buildings - and hoped it would not take too long and interfere with their openings.

**Pixham Residents**; **Pat** said... Nothing much to report - all going well.

**Churches Together**; **Anthony** advised of the deep and general sadness on the sudden death of Bishop Andrew, and confirmed the funeral would be in the Cathedral on mon23mar at 12:00 - but that attendance would be over-subscribed, but those in Dorking could view the live feed at St Paul's. On a much happier note, he thanked everyone for the 'Festival of Light' which had ended in St Martin's with the many lanterns being displayed. The arrival of Rev Stephen at the Christian Centre prompted questions about their working-together - on which Anthony explained that their long-established 'sharing' of services/activities had been appropriate in the past but not after CoE had sold the hall to the Methodists, so now they operated more independently.

**Goodwyns Community Chapel**; Nelson added his own delight at the turn-out - and also mentioned their co-operating in the Good Friday 'Walk of Witness'.

**Bandstand**; **Nick** was happy to report that the bandstand had been assembled, and that ground works on the site would start mid-April for about a month - and he was leafleting nearby residents with that news and with an open invite to join in a co-ordinating team not just for this but for future programming and usage; further, he announced that the Circus was also returning in June (earning £9k for MVDC).

**Town-Twinning**; **Margaret** advised that their AGM at Lyons Court had been good; and their developing relationship with Duxbury has resulted in the signing of a concord; and 18 folk from Guglingen would be arriving in June.

**Dorking Men's Shed**; No report

**West Street traders**; No report

**Friends of Dorking/Food Float**; No report

**Mid-Surrey Community Fridges**; No report

**Dorking Mental Caring**; No report

**(9) OTHER ITEMS**; None

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Monday 13 APRIL 2026**

The meeting started at 17:30 and concluded at 19:20

PJTmar26