

**MINUTES OF THE LEIGH ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL HALL,
HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 15TH APRIL 2013 AT 8PM**

PRESENT: Cllr. C. Stratton-Brown (Chairman), Cllr P. Croft, Cllr B. Doherty, Cllr J. Knock, Cllr G. Marchant, Cllr S. Smith and Cllr R. Swallow
APOLOGIES: Cllr D. Bennie and Dr. Alun Griffiths of Kent Men of the Trees
ABSENT: Cllr A. Johnston
IN ATTENDANCE: District Cllr A. Cook, County Cllr P. Lake, Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk), and members of the public

Cllr Stratton-Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Presentation by Dr. Alun Griffiths, Chairman of Kent Men of the Trees**
Unfortunately Dr Griffiths is unwell and has sent his apologies for not being able to attend the meeting.
2. **The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th April 2012** were approved.
3. **Chairman's Report of Activities in 2012/13**
Cllr Stratton-Brown gave the following report:
 1. The Council: There have been no changes in the membership of the Council during the year. Councillors were David Bennie, Peter Croft, Beverley Doherty, Alan Johnston, John Knock, Graham Marchant, Sue Smith, Rob Swallow and myself. Louise Kleinschmidt continued as our Clerk.
 2. Her Majesty the Queens Golden Jubilee: This was celebrated with a firework display on The Green paid for out of the surplus fund arising from the very successful Royal Wedding Celebrations.
 3. Subjects Considered: To show what your Council gets up to, the following is a list of subjects dealt with:-
 - Traffic calming measures on the Hildenborough Road by Laundry Cottage
 - The kerb stones round The Green - many thanks to Graham Marchant for his help and to County Councillor Peter Lake for securing us a grant from KCC
 - Yellow lines in The High Street
 - The SDC Community Infrastructure Levy
 - Improving Broadband connections, many thanks to Rob Swallow for his work
 - Effect of Government changes on the Precept
 - Planning applications including that for the land to the rear of Garden Cottage
 - Sevenoaks District Council consultation about the GSK site at the Powdermills
 - The trees on The Green and the old burial ground, trees are surveyed to ensure they are safe
 - Tree works applications, many thanks to Peter Croft for reviewing them for us
 - Maintenance including grass cutting of The Green, KCC Landscape Services continue with the contract to mow The Green as they are competitively priced and use child and pet friendly sprays
 - The "Run the Race" activities
 - Family Fun Summer Play scheme, this will be held again this year on 23rd August
 - Litter Picking, this is still being considered and volunteers are required
 - The Queen's Diamond Jubilee
 - The Village Halls
 - The Aged Persons Dwellings, many thanks to Alan Johnston for his contribution on the APD's and the village halls

- A Neighbourhood Plan, this is a new plan which is in addition to the Parish Plan and Village Design Statement, volunteers are required to help prepare the plan
- Finance: grants, expenditure, budget and audit – many thanks to John Knock for his input
- Setting of the Precept
- Insurance
- Cutting of Verges in conjunction with Chiddingsone, Penshurst and Hever – many thanks to Louise for all her work
- Complaint about the handling of a planning meeting, not taken any further
- The SDC Big Community Fund
- Community Governance Review: Application for 3 properties to transfer to Penshurst
- Transport rail and buses services
- The General Power of Competence
- The Hall Place wall
- Leigh Cricket Pavilion
- Gatwick Aircraft noise
- The resurfacing of Green View Avenue
- Adoption of a new Code of Conduct
- The role of a Parish Tree Warden
- The Council's responsibilities as the Custodian Trustee of the Village Halls, the Parish Council is delighted that the halls are so well looked after
- The Bulk Refuse Freighter service
- Review of the Clerks hours and salary scale point
- Cutting of the footpath across the former Chiddingstone Causeway airfield site
- A footpath from Knotley Hall to connect with the pavement to Chiddingstone Causeway, with thanks to Peter Lake for all his hard work
- The shed to the rear of Jessica's Hall which has been given to the school
- The right of way outside the former Bat and Ball pub
- KCC's performance on highway maintenance
- Flooding of Coppings Road and maintenance of road side ditches

4. Some of the major issues were:

1. Planning: The Parish Council considered 26 planning applications, one less than last year. Council supported 19, supported with comments a further 5, just commented on 3 and objected to one. The one we objected to was, to our surprise approved by the District Council.
 A planning application for thirteen houses, including four affordable units, was submitted for the land to the south of Garden Cottages. Subject to conditions, including the retention of trees and an improved access at the bottom of Hollow Trees Drive, this was approved by the District Council.
 A report commissioned by the Sevenoaks District Council on the future of the Glaxo Smith Kline research facility site at the Powder Mills. This concluded that this site, because of its location and difficult transport links, is unsuitable for industrial use and proposed that the best use is to provide more residential accommodation. The District Council preferred the new laboratory building to be retained as an office and accepted that the remainder of the site should be used for residential use. In the light of this the Parish Council established a working party to discuss the future of this site made up of representatives from the Parish Council and local residents from the Powdermills. The working party, ably chaired by Councillor Beverley Doherty, after much hard work and about a dozen meetings, submitted a report that was sent on to the District Council. This suggested that owing to the constraints of the site the maximum number of houses that could be accommodated should be limited to a density of 15 dwellings per hectare.

Sadly, the District Council decided that a density of 25 dwellings per hectare which gives a figure of 60 dwellings on the residual site after allowing for the retained new building and ancillary parking and the reduction for the flood plain.

The Sevenoaks Boxing Club on the Gaza estate submitted a proposal to vary the hours it was allowed to be open. The club had for many years ignored the planning conditions placed on the site under the previous planning permissions. The club had started boxercise, training to loud music and shouting to encourage the participants. As the Gaza site is locked on a Sunday, parking could only take place on the road. For these reasons the Council strongly objected to the application and was astonished that the District Council approved it. Your Council believe that the correct procedures were ignored and so has complained to SDC. A response is awaited and our complaint has now gone to a stage 2 complaint. Local residents have applied for a judicial review.

Very many thanks to Beverley Doherty for the many hours she has put in on all these planning issues

2. Finance – Three factors greatly influenced the setting of the precept for 2013/14. The first was the amount of work needed for planning which has increased significantly. The Glaxo Smith Kline site necessitated a considerable increase in our Clerk's hours, which had already increased by the complexity of many issues. Secondly, your Council considered a planning consultant's help was necessary for the GSK site. These increased costs are likely to continue for the indefinite future. The third was that a reduction was made to the council's tax base to reflecting the known recipients of housing benefit. Hence the precept had to be increased to cover this reduction. Councillors regretted it but it was felt that in the interest of being able to respond carefully to planning and other issues there was no option but to increase the precept from £18,500 to £24,000.

5. Concluding Remarks – I must thank all our Councillors for their work and support during the year. I am privileged to chair a council who all work together for the benefit of the village. Very many thanks to Councillor Alison Cook and Councillor Peter Lake, our District and County Council representatives, for their untiring efforts on behalf of the parish and, despite their other commitments, their regular attendance at our meetings. I must also thank Louise for her untiring efforts for the parish and, I suspect working many more hours than her agreement.

Cllr Knock thanked Cllr Stratton-Brown for his hard work and commitment as Chairman to the Parish Council.

4. **Report by County Cllr Peter Lake**

County Cllr Lake said "I have been your County Councillor for nearly 20 years and I have enjoyed every minute of it. Why did I become a county councillor? I like people - I get on with them and I want to help them. Yes, I have been a political animal and a supporter of the Conservative party but in local government and as a local member, I have been totally non-political.

The constituency of Sevenoaks South is NOT just Leigh– it is also Cowden, Hever, Markbeece, Chiddingstone, Four Elms, Chiddingstone Causeway, Marsh Green, Penshurst and Fordcombe and how could I forget Edenbridge.

I have attended as many Parish and Town Council meetings as possible – great to listen to your concerns and worries – and it is not just about potholes. It has been a most difficult year for KCC, having to save more than £75million from its annual budget and further savings have to be made in the current financial year. However, I am assured that essential services will be maintained.

As well as being member for Sevenoaks South I have done many other things for KCC.

Sandy Bruce-Lockhart called me the day after the election in 2001:

“Peter – do you want the shits job – Social Services – 2 minutes to think about it” I turned to Nella: “of course you’ve got to do it” Well, we achieved top marks 4* status – 5 years in a row.

Then there was the PFI money on offer from Gordon Brown. Having seen run down care homes and disabled children playing in a morgue in a former cottage hospital in Sevenoaks, I drew up a little plan. I commissioned the building of 3 state of the art care homes in Tenterden, Margate & Gravesend and 2 specialist children’s units – one in Bidborough opened by Dame Kelly Holmes and one in Whitstable opened by the Princess Royal. They have all been a huge success.

Let me turn to schools – very dear to my heart. Our primary school in Leigh has changed beyond all recognition. I have been a huge supporter to give our children the best start in life. Their results have gone from strength to strength and all credit to their teaching staff and the governors.

One of my top priorities has been to help families to get their children to the school of their choice:

I have helped children to get to grammar schools.

I have helped with transport issues and appeals.

I have also helped the elderly to find the care homes of their choice and as near as possible to their families.

And then there is Gatwick; I went ballistic when I heard that KCC was advocating a 2nd runway at Gatwick. I called for a 3rd runway at Heathrow because Richard Branson had offered to lob £5billion towards its cost. I called for night flights at Heathrow because Gatwick has more than its fair share. I still feel that ‘Boris Island’ is the most sensible approach and I have gone on local BBC Radio to say so. What trouble I have got into but I am determined as ever to stand up for my electorate in West Kent.

I became Chairman of KCC in 2008/9. Away from the County Council I have been a non-executive director of the Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership Trust, a member of St John Ambulance and a member of the Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Service.

I would just like to end by thanking you all, and, in particular, Louise our clerk, for your really valuable support over the past 20 years.”

Cllr Marchant thanked County Cllr Lake for all his has done for the parish over the last 20 years, it is much appreciated. Cllr Stratton-Brown agreed and gave C.Cllr Lake a gift as a thank you from the Parish Council for all his support and help over many years.

5. Report by District Cllr Alison Cook

District Cllr Cook firstly thanked the Parish Council, Chairman and Clerk for all they do, and particularly for the work done on the GSK and Boxing Club issues. D.Cllr Cook echoed the sentiments about County Cllr Lake, adding that we will all miss him!

District Cllr Cook then read her report: “All local Authorities are experiencing significant changes in legislation, in funding and in the way they operate with an emphasis on the importance of localism on the one hand and increasing centralisation on the other. This year has seen changes in planning policies, business rates, benefits and the criteria and formulae for levying funding from developers. The work of District Councils is in constant flux; however Sevenoaks views these changes as opportunities rather than obstacles to be overcome. We are extremely fortunate in the calibre of the staff who have the enthusiasm to rise to these challenges.

Unfortunately SDC has again be a major loser in grant allocation from Government. Over the past three years it has suffered a loss of £2.6m. or 40% with a further 6% cut to be made in 2014/15. To date the Council has made savings of £4.5m. but will have to find a further £300,000 over the next twelve months. Part of this saving will be achieved through the slimming down of the management structure, reducing the Executive from one Chief Executive and two Directors to just a Chief Executive supported by Heads of Service who will have to absorb a far greater workload. In these uncertain times having an ongoing ten year budget plan is a valuable tool in helping the Council to identify cost pressures and potential savings.

Unlike previous years Members decided not to accept Government's offer of 1% support guaranteed for the next two years in return for a Council Tax freeze as this would have perpetuated a static tax base from which it would have been difficult to recover. Instead a modest increase of 1.98% was agreed, the equivalent of £3.60 p.a. on the SDC share.

In contrast to many Councils, SDC is unlikely to benefit from changes to the business rate collection since the majority of businesses in the District are small to medium size. SDC would therefore only qualify for the minimum return. Equally, because the District is almost totally washed over by the Green Belt there are few development opportunities over and above the proposed housing allocation unlike Councils such as Ashford which can expect to lever in several million pounds from new build.

Members continue to examine all the services currently undertaken by the Council, whether these are statutory or non-statutory, to see where savings can be made without compromising quality, although some changes are inevitable. The Council actively supports working with partners from both the voluntary and public sectors looking for ever greater opportunities for collaborative working. It will also continue to fund charities delivering those services which assist in achieving the District's Community Plan.

Internally members are examining the current division between the Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees to ensure that this model reflects the changes being made to the management structure. Another debate, yet to be held, will be around the current number of Councillors and whether this number can be justified given the significant and ongoing reduction in the Council's spending powers.

In the meantime it's business as usual, changes to be implemented and major decisions to be made.

Finally my grateful thanks to the Chairman, Clerk and Councillors for their hard work in keeping the village in good shape and for their help and support in looking after the interests of our residents."

6. Report by Kent Police

PCSO Dave O'Neil reported that he has been a PCSO for ten years and he now covers three wards: Leigh and Chiddingstone Causeway; Peshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone; and Hever & Cowden. Before the cutbacks, there was a PCSO for each ward. Crime figures are low and the Sevenoaks area is the safest in the district. There were 43 reported crimes in the Leigh and Chiddingstone Causeway ward during the past year, which is a reduction (53 last year). The crimes are as follows:

- Criminal Damage: 5 more than last year
- Theft Motor: 1 more than last year
- Burglary Dwelling: 2 less than last year
- Burglary Other: 5 less than last year
- Shoplifting: one which is no change on last year's figures
- Violent Crimes: 3 less than last year

PCSO O'Neil advised that he drives through Leigh three times a day and he runs surgeries. If members of the public wish to see him, they should call the non-emergency police number 101 and request an appointment. Cllr Stratton-Brown asked members of the public to ensure that they always report crimes, and PCSO O'Neil agreed that even the smallest crime should be reported as it allows the Police to see patterns in criminal behaviour, leading to more arrests.

8. Reports by representatives of Leigh parish clubs, societies and organisations

i. Leigh Rugby Club

Mark Doherty, who is the President and founder member of Leigh Rugby Club, said that the club was formed in 2003 when a couple of residents agreed to play a game after watching the Rugby World Cup in The Fleur. Now, ten years later, the club plays in the Rural Kent Division and will be promoted at the end of this season. Membership is 60 + and consideration is being given to perhaps running two sides next season.

The club plays at The Field of Dreams, just outside Chiddingstone Causeway, which used to be the Charcott Football Club ground. The Rugby Club want to try and negotiate a 15 to 25 year lease with The Redleaf Trust, and want to try and get some funding to develop the old portacabin on the field. The club is a member of the RFU. Please see their website for more information of the club and details how to become a member www.leighrfc.co.uk. Cllr Doherty asked if there are any plans for junior coaching, and Mr Doherty replied that the schools all do tag-rugby at the moment and it may be possible to arrange a tournament of the local schools. Touch rugby is played on The Green in the summer.

ii. Leigh Tennis Club

Laurence Coleman, who is the President of Leigh Tennis Club, said that the club has been running since 1981. Membership is 190, and there are different types of membership: juniors, students, adults, seniors and families. There are some concessionary memberships too. A lottery grant allowed the club to have a new club house with improved facilities, re-surfaced courts and floodlights. Juniors make up 50% of the membership and the club encourages juniors to play even if they are not members. The club provides coaching for juniors aged 9-12 on Saturday mornings and the school children have coaching on Wednesdays. There is free play with coaches in attendance on Wednesday evenings. There are 160 children participating in these sessions plus the school children who receive coaching. The club encourages juniors to play competitive tennis but they don't force them. It's a great social club.

iii. Leigh Cricket Club regarding the proposed new cricket nets

Mrs Helen Scott reported that the village lacks a cricket net for juniors to practice. It would be great to have a permanent net and it is hoped that this can be erected on the school owned playing field near the tennis courts. The Tennis Club, Cricket Club and the school are all supportive of the proposal. Quotes have been received of £5,000 for a basic set up and 17,000 for more complete coverage. The cheaper version will be adequate and efforts to raise this amount are underway. It is hoped that the insurance will be covered by the school, but this is unconfirmed.

iii. Leigh United Charities

Cllr Knock reported that the charities have investments in stocks (£189,000) and some accumulated income (£44,000). The charities own 1 & 2 Cherry Tree Cottages on The Green and the leasehold of Saxby's Wood flats. Grants are given to those in need in the parish and the charities pay gas and electricity bills for some residents. £2,600 was given to Leigh Primary School as a contribution towards the new classroom. Cllr Knock asked that if anyone knows of any parishioner in need to please ask them to contact the charity.

iv. The Crandalls Charity

Colin Stratton-Brown reported that the trust is formed from the will of the late Mr Crandall. Last year, £4,000 was given to the community including £600 to Leigh Primary School to help fund school trips for families in need. There are also donations to the Tennis Club and to the Church, which helps finance the scout leader.

9. Questions from members of the public, matters for reporting and diary dates

1. Sarah Cook asked whether the public toilets can be re-opened? Cllr Doherty advised that SDC decommissioned the toilets due to high costs and high levels of vandalism, and the school has now acquired the building.
2. Sarah Cook asked whether the large oak posts on The Green could be removed as they do not stop cars parking on The Green and just end up being used for posters to advertise events. Cllr Stratton-Brown said that there would be far more damage to The Green without the posts, but suggested that the Parish Council consider the matter at their next meeting.

3. Tigger Boyne asked why the High Street isn't swept? Cllr Stratton-Brown reported that the vehicle cannot access the gutter area due to the parked cars. Even if SDC write in advance and ask that vehicles are not parked on the road so that the cleansing vehicle can attend, people take no notice.
4. Dr Simon Scott said that there are three rusty, dumped cars near Leigh Railway Station that have been there for years, can they not be moved? Cllr Stratton-Brown advised that the Police and KCC can do nothing as the cars are on private property.
5. Tigger Boyne asked whether double yellow lines could be painted on the road from Church Hill to Charlotte Cottages? Cllr Stratton-Brown advised that this has been discussed many times, but it is felt by the Police that the parked vehicles in the High Street act as a natural traffic calming measure.
6. Dr Simon Scott said that the noise from the A21 is terrible. Part of the approval for the road was that there are sound barriers, which were erected when the road was built, but have since disappeared. Steven Turvey has copies of all the agreements with the Highways Agency. It was agreed that as much information as possible should be collated and then the Parish Council can discuss the matter and possibly escalate the problem to Sir John Stanley.
7. Sarah Cook reported that there is a very noisy manhole cover outside South View near the Church. Clerk to report to KCC.
8. Tigger Boyne volunteered for a litter picking session.
9. Ian Harris asked when Green View Avenue will be resurfaced? C.Cllr Peter Lake advised that it is on the list to be done and hopefully we will hear at the end of May when the work will be carried out.

Cllr Stratton-Brown thanked everyone very much for coming to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm

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The following reports were circulated as a hand-out.

**LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCE REPORT FOR YEAR 2012-2013**

The Parish Council's financial year runs from 1st April until 31st March. The precept for the year 2012-13 was £18,500. This sum, which is generated from residents' Council Tax, is paid to the Parish Council by Sevenoaks District Council. The precept for 2013-14 has been increased to £24,000. Although members were concerned about raising the precept in this current economic climate, the Parish Council has kept the precept at a low level, the cheapest in the district, for many years and members felt it was prudent to build reserves for cover future costs relating to the APD and the possible services of a planning consultant. The Parish Council is taking on some functions from both the county and district councils, who are struggling to finance non-essential services, and the Parish Council believe that these services are of local importance to the community. Annual memberships have been renewed to the following:

Kent Association of Local Councils	£522.79
Action with Communities in Rural Kent	£35.00
CPRE	£29.00
Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign	£15.00
Parish Council Legal Update publication	£75.00
Kent Playing Fields Association	£20.00
Society of Local Council Clerks	£78.50

Grants have been awarded as follows:

Leigh PCC – contribution towards The Leigh Directory	£300.00
Leigh Primary School – contribution towards a new classroom	£2,500.00
Leigh Tennis Club - contribution towards coaching school pupils	£450.00

Our grateful thanks go to Mr Roger Sykes for undertaking our internal audit for the year 2012-13, and the Audit Commission signed off our Annual Return confirming that the accounts were in good order.

Below is a summary of the Parish Council's Income and Expenditure for the year 2012-13:

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Precept	18,500.00	Salaries	7,456.52
APD rental	9,865.00	PAYE	2,472.70
Income received: hire of assets	450.00	Pension contribution	2,482.85
Wayleave	1.15	Mileage	542.00
Interest on Investments	24.97	Stationery	248.56
Grant from KCC for kerbing	5,000.00	Telephone/Email	210.30
Other income	2004.40	Office Expenses	723.52
		Website	145.00
		Insurance	1,366.45
		Audit/Accountancy	285.00
		Chairman's Expenses	12.38
		Training	118.00
		Subscriptions	775.29
		Hall Hire	140.00
		Repairs & Maintenance	235.00
		Village Green	5,484.19
		Litter / dog bins	1,239.00
		Grants	3,250.00
		APD	430.19
		Family Fun Play Scheme	425.00
		Planning Consultant fee - GSK	750.00
		Jubilee & 'Run the Race' events	790.21
	<u>35,845.52</u>		<u>29,582.16</u>
		Surplus of Income / Expenditure	6,263.36
		Transfers to reserves: APD:	2000.00
		Election expenses:	275.00
		Planning contingency:	250.00
		General contingency:	500.00
		Surplus after transfers to reserves	3,238.36

Louise Kleinschmidt

Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer

Leigh Village Halls Management Committee – Chairman’s Report April 2013

1. Ongoing maintenance of the Halls

Over the last 12 months the management committee have carried out the following:

- Redecorated the Small Village Hall
- Replaced the worn out Small Hall floor
- Renewed all the notice boards in the Small Hall
- Cleaned the Large Hall ceiling (this is the first time it has been cleaned since the Hall was built)
- Redecorated the Large Village Hall
- Resurfaced the driveway to the side of the Halls (the driveway was last resurfaced in 1967)
- Refurbished the Large Hall boiler
- Purchased new and additional tables for the Halls

2. Financial developments during the year

- Doctor’s surgery
The three yearly rent review of the doctor’s surgery was renegotiated this year, and in view of the current economic climate the rent was continued for a further 3 years at £3250 per annum.
- Royal British Legion
The RBL are undertaking a major refurbishment of the clubroom and as part of this we have renegotiated the term of their lease from 12 years to 25 years, commencing from the date of the completion of the refurbishment (all other aspects of the lease remain unaltered).
- Bank Accounts
We have in recent years had 2 bank accounts, one for the day to day management of the Halls and one a fundraising account for the refurbishment. In view of the fact that the refurbishment has now been completed, the two accounts have now been amalgamated into one. The current balance is £21,000.
- Hall fees
The Halls continue to generate a small profit each year, which is invested back into maintaining the Halls. In view of this the committee have maintained the hiring fees at their existing levels, making us the cheapest and one of the most used Village Halls in Kent. The Small Hall is booked every morning, most afternoons and most evenings, with regular party bookings at weekends. The Large Hall is booked every evening, with some bookings during the day and a party booking about once a month (we could still work to increase the use of the Large Hall during the day).
- Fundraising events
The Management Committee have agreed to support Hall Place with regard to managing their tea room on Open Days. There has been an informal arrangement for a few years now, and this was formalised, including agreeing the dividing up of any funds raised between Hall Place and The Village Halls. In addition we undertake to run the tea room at Penshurst Farmers Market once a year, and intend to continue to run one major event (last year it was a St George’s Day party) once every 18 months.

3. Management Committee members

The Management Committee was pleased to welcome 2 new members this year, in addition to the existing members, taking the total number of trustees on the committee to 17. The committee meets about once every 6 weeks with in excess of 12 attending and often the full 17 in attendance. The commitment and enthusiasm of all the committee members is outstanding. Particular thanks go to Alan Johnston, who as well as being the Treasurer and General Maintenance Manager, undertakes a significant amount of the work himself (including this year repainting the Small Hall).

4. Plans for the next 12 months

The Committee have set themselves the following objectives for the next 12 months:

- Refurbishment of the Small Hall toilets
- Repairing of the exterior drainpipes
- Replacing the locks on the internal Large Hall doors
- Painting the Doctor’s surgery
- Undertaking a complete spring clean of the complex
- Cleaning of exterior brickwork
- Installing a microphone system in the Large Hall
- Refurbishing the Large Hall kitchen annex

Helen Everett

Chairman, Leigh Village Halls Management Committee
14th April 2013.