

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 7TH OCTOBER 2024 AT 8.00PM

PRESENT: Cllr J. Kaye (Chairman), Cllr A. Backlog, Cllr R. Britain, Cllr A. Holt, Cllr G. Marchant, Cllr G. Rogers, Cllr G. Southwell and Cllr S. Smith

APOLOGIES: Cllr B. Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk). County Cllr M. McArthur, District Cllr M. Silander and six members of the public attended the Open Session only.

Open Session

To welcome VolkerStevin and The Environment Agency to hear an update on the Leigh Barrier works

Cllr Kaye welcomed Liz Faulkner (Customer Liaison Officer, VolkerStevin), Josh Hawkins (Project Manager, VolkerStevin), Radu Iepure Carolea (Environment Agency) and Samantha Howe (Senior Advisor, Environment Agency) to the meeting.

Josh reported that at the beginning of the summer a crane was delivered to the site in Leigh, and the old barrier gate at the south gate was removed. Two weeks ago a new gate was installed as a replacement and as a result there has been a lot of mechanical works on site. The Cattle Arch is nearly finished and then this area will be cleared. The next phase will involve wiring up the system and to ensure it all works electronically. The area at Hayesden Park has been raised and open stone asphalt has been laid. The remainder of the gates will be installed next year.

Samantha said prior to the works, a maximum level of 28.05 metres above ordnance datum (AOD) could be stored in the Leigh Flood Storage Area. After the Leigh Barrier works, this will increase to 28.6 metres AOD which will reduce flood risk to over 1,400 homes in Tonbridge and Hildenborough. There is a wave retention facility incorporated in the embankment. The Leigh barrier is and has been operational at all times. The south gate has been replaced and the other two will be replaced in summer 2025 when river flows are lowest. The two YouTube animations are useful, the Clerk confirmed that these are on the Parish Council's website.

Radu said that the Environment Agency will install a camera on Ensfield Road to monitor surface water flooding and to inform whether it will be necessary to impound the road.

Josh undertook to check whether access for pedestrians is retained when the water level is high at the Cattle Arch and also to check water levels at the kissing gate after heavy rain.

Cllr Kaye thanked Liz, Josh, Radu and Samantha for coming along and for the informative update. They left the meeting at 8.25pm.

Report by County Cllr McArthur

County Cllr McArthur reported that KCC is discussing various proposals being considered by the new Government including the abolition of the 25% discount on council tax for single households, and VAT on private school fees. There are 95 private schools in Kent and when VAT is imposed on fees in January 2025 it is anticipated that half of these schools will have to close and there will be a large impact on state schools. KCC is also discussing biometric fingerprint checks at the port of Dover as this will cause long delays. The creation of holding areas to cope with the delays is being considered. The Government is giving KCC £1.6m to help fund road maintenance.

Report by District Cllr Silander

District Cllr Silander reported that SDC is also discussing how the new Government will take things forward. The Regulation 18 consultation for the new Local Plan may need to be re-considered, or even re-consulted. The Government still wants to protect Green Belt land from development but brownfield sites and new Grey Belt land may be developed. The definition of Grey Belt land was included in the consultation for proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. The requirement for new houses in the district is 17,000 over a 15 year period. SDC is also considering its budget for 2025-26 at the moment and there is currently a small budget gap.

County Cllr McArthur left the meeting at 8.36pm.

Questions from members of the public

1. A member of the public attended to raise concern about cars being parked on the pavement in Powdermill Lane and at The Forstall. This makes the pavements impassable which is a safety concern for those with pushchairs and wheelchairs. Members agreed that this is a problem and the resident should note the time and date of cars parking illegally which can be passed to Kent Police. There is the same problem in the High Street and also near the Fleur de Lis public house, where people park on double yellow lines. The resident added that parking around the school is an issue and causes congestion and Clerk to contact the school to discuss the introduction of a drop-and-go system with a one-way system around The Green. Cllr Holt advised that a parking warden regularly attends at school drop off and pick up times to ensure that people are parking properly.
2. A member of the public attended to discuss the application for grant from Leigh Performing Arts. Cllr Rogers and Cllr Backlog declared an NPI in this matter. The current production is for four performances and 120 seats per performance. This year, the group wants to provide a video as well as live action which is necessary for the show. There is a budget deficit of £4,396 and the group is requesting a grant of £900.

Cllr Silander and one member of the public left the meeting at 9.00pm.

Closed Session

81. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Williams and his reason for absence was accepted by the Parish Council.
82. **Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest / Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
Cllr Roger and Cllr Backlog both declared an NPI in item 96(ii) as they belong to Leigh Performing Arts.
83. **The minutes of the Leigh Parish Council Meeting held on 2nd September 2024** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Marchant, and all were in favour.
84. **To co-opt a new member of the Parish Council following the resignation of Sean Satterley**
Cllr Kaye advised that a few members and the Clerk met Graham Southwell to discuss his possible co-option onto the Parish Council and thanked Graham for his interest and willingness to become a member. Cllr Britain proposed that Graham Southwell be co-opted onto the Parish Council with immediate effect, this was seconded by Cllr Smith and all were in favour. Cllr Southwell signed his declaration of acceptance of office form which was counter-signed by the Clerk. He also completed and returned his dispensation request form for discussions relating to setting the precept, which will run until the Town and Parish Council election in 2027. He undertook to complete and return his DPI and NPI forms as soon as possible. Members welcomed Cllr Southwell to the Parish Council.
85. **To nominate new Parish Council representative(s) on the Leigh Village Halls Committee**
Members nominated Cllr Backlog to be the main representative on the Leigh Village Halls Management Committee and it was agreed to create a WhatsApp group of members who would be able to assist Cllr Backlog and also attend meetings on Cllr Backlog's behalf if she is unable to attend.
86. **Planning**
 - i. To consider applications received
 - i. SE/24/02371/WTCA: Kennards, Hildenborough Road, Leigh TN11 8RE - Fir Tree, take down to ground level. Members had no comment to make on this application.
 - ii. SE/24/02320/VAR106: Land East of Charcott Green Cottages, Charcott, Leigh TN11 8LH - variation of a S106 legal agreement relating to SE/07/00962/FUL. The variation will update the mortgagee protection provisions to the NHF wording to allow for charging at MV-T (market value subject to tenancy) rather than EUV-SH (existing use value social housing). This will significantly increase the value that WKHA is able to charge the properties at which will provide them with further funding for development and improving their current stock.

- Planning Committee to agree a response before the deadline of 11th October.
- iii. KCC/SE/0129/2024: Leigh Primary School Playing Field, Lealands Avenue, Leigh, Tonbridge, Kent, TN11 8QU - erection of a replacement gazebo style outdoor classroom with a fixed roof, floor and open sides for use by the School's Forest School. Planning Committee to agree a response before the deadline of 31st October.
 - ii. To report SDC planning application decisions:
 - SE/24/01835/LDCEX: Land East of Eggpie Cottage, Egg Pie Lane, Sevenoaks Weald - confirmation of commencement of permission SE/21/01766/FUL. Application approved.
 - SE/24/00734/FUL: Land West of Hale Oak Farmhouse, Hale Oak Road, Sevenoaks Weald - the conversion of an existing agricultural barn into a two storey dwelling and detached garage. Application withdrawn.
 - SE/24/01150/FUL: Hall Place, Penshurst Road, Leigh - proposed storage building with hardstanding and landscaping. Application approved.
 - SE/24/02000/WTCA: Kennards, Hildenborough Road, Leigh - works to trees in a Conservation Area. No Objection Lodged
 - SE/24/02060/WTCA: Church Hill House, Church Hill, Leigh - works to trees in a Conservation Area: Lime - crown lift to 4.5m, Magnolia - crown lift to 4.5m over road, reduce remainder by up to 2m. No Objection Lodged.
 - SE/24/01901/HOUSE: Pond Cottage, Egg Pie Lane, Sevenoaks Weald - new 14 free standing pv panels and installation of new freestanding air source heat pump. Application approved.
 - iii. To hear update regarding the Parish Council's response to the NPPF consultation
The Clerk reported that the Planning Committee agreed a response which was submitted before the deadline. This can be found on the Parish Council's website under Parish Council meetings as an attachment to the agenda.
 - iv. The Clerk reported that an email has been received from a resident regarding repairs at Old Wood Cottage, the contents of which were noted.

87. The Green

- i. To hear update on the specialist cabling work on the Veteran Oak Tree
The Clerk reported that, as previously approved, the work for new cabling on the Oak Tree has been awarded to Max Ferretti at Absolute Arboriculture and the cabling will be installed as per the recommendation contained in Absolute Arboriculture's report dated July 2024. The work will be undertaken in October by a sub-contractor of Absolute Arboriculture, Fletcher Tree Services in accordance with the recommendations. Alex Fletcher of Fletcher Tree Services is fully qualified and has many years of relevant experience. The report recommends that the existing static cabling will remain in place and not be removed as this could create a scar on the tree which could then become diseased. This recommendation will also be followed, and the static bracing will remain. Members discussed the email correspondence received from a member of the public who has requested details of the Parish Council's insurance policy. The Chair noted that a very substantial volume of increasingly strongly worded correspondence has been received from this member of the public in the form of many tens of emails. In order to ensure that all bracing options have been explored, multiple tree specialists have been engaged to gain the benefit of their experience. The Clerk reported that, after consultation with the Chair, she has contacted the insurance company to inform them of the following facts, and to ask whether the insurance company will discuss the Parish Council's policy with a third party. The facts relayed to the insurance company are:
 - The Parish Council carries out an annual tree survey on all the trees on Parish Council land, with written reports.
 - The Parish Council maintains a risk assessment which is annually reviewed, or more regularly if required.
 - The Parish Council has commissioned a Veteran Tree Report by a specialist tree company.
 - The Parish Council has commissioned a Cabling Report by a bracing specialist tree consultant, and has also obtained opinion from other local tree companies.
 - The Parish Council believe that the correct procedure has been followed and the Parish Council has now instructed the bracing specialist tree consultant to install some Cobra bracing.

This will be as per the recommendation contained in his report. All the companies who were asked for their opinion have said that Cobra bracing is the correct bracing to be installed on this particular tree.

- The Parish Council has also carried out works to the tree as recommended in the Veteran Tree report, namely pruned it back to reduce the weight of the branches and re-mulched under the canopy. All the companies that the Parish Council has talked to have said that keeping the tree well maintained with the weight reduced on the branches is most important.
- The Parish Council's Independent Internal Auditor is aware of this matter and has said that the Parish Council has followed correct procedure.

Members were keen to ensure that full transparency is in place and agreed that contacting the insurance company was the correct course of action.

Members expressed thanks to the resident for his interest in this matter and his views have been taken into account throughout the process of surveying the tree and agreeing the correct type of cabling, which in this instance is Cobra bracing as per the specialist recommendations.

- ii. To hear update regarding the other works on the Veteran Oak Tree as previously agreed
 - i. The Clerk reported that the hole at the base of the tree has now been blocked.
 - ii. Regarding the inspection of all the existing wire cabling clips and where necessary replace / reinstall so that the dead end of the wire (cut end) is at the top and the live end at the bottom on the saddle and tightened to the correct torque, it was agreed that the Clerk would ask Fletcher Tree Services to carry out this inspection.
- iii. To discuss Landscape Services' quote for grounds maintenance 2025

Members asked the Clerk to query the increase which is 20% and item to be discussed again at the next Parish Council meeting.
- iv. To hear update regarding the maintenance of the benches on The Green

The Clerk reported that this will be done in the next few weeks.
- v. The Vicarage

Cllr Britain reported that the Vicarage hedge is still overgrown. Members were concerned about the future use of the dwelling and Clerk to contact the Diocesan Office.

The member of the public left the meeting at 9.35pm.

- 88. To hear update regarding the refurbishment of the Charcott phonebox, postbox and noticeboard**
Cllr Holt reported that the Greyhound pub is co-ordinating the refurbishment. The Clerk has delivered the undercoat and paint for the work.

89. Highways & Rights of Way

- i. To consider starting a Leigh Community SpeedWatch Scheme

The Clerk reported that two people have been in contact saying that they would be interested in volunteering. The process is that volunteers undertake an online training course which takes about 30 mins with a short test, and then some roadside training, which the Clerk can do as she is fully trained. The equipment comes from a manufacturer in Rusthall and costs in the region of £2,000. This can be covered by CIL funding. Members agreed to proceed and Clerk to discuss with Chiddingstone Parish Council as to whether their equipment can be borrowed in the short term.
- ii. To discuss uneven surface on footpath between Kiln Lane and Well Close

The Clerk reported that she has contacted the lawyers for the landowners of the triangle of land adjacent to the footpath but has yet to receive a response. Clerk to chase.
- iii. To hear update regarding the resurfacing of the Hildenborough Road

The Clerk reported that the road will be resurfaced between 7th and 20th November.
- iv. Charcott signs

The Clerk reported that she has requested replacement signs for Charcott to be installed at the junction with Compasses Lane, and also brown heritage signs for The Greyhound Public House.
- v. Enfield Road Railway Bridge

Members agreed that the signage at the bridge is not good enough, despite KCC Highways inspecting and advising that it is satisfactory. Clerk to add to the Leigh Highways Improvement Plan.

vi. Road Closures

- UK Power Networks - Temporary Road Closure - Scabharbour Road, Sevenoaks Weald - 7th October 2024 for 5 days outside Pitts Farm. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while works are undertaken by UK Power Networks. See <https://one.network/?tm=140169367>
- Temporary Road Closure - Hildenborough Road, Leigh & Stocks Green Road, Hildenborough - 7th November 2024 with estimated completion by 20th November 2024 from the junction of Powder Mill Lane and the junction of Rings Hill, between the hours of 20:00 and 05:00 only. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce to allow resurfacing works to be carried out, works are undertaken by KCC. See <https://one.network/?tm=139762544>
- Temporary Road Closure - B2027 High Street, Leigh - 29th October 2024 for 3 days between 7:00hrs and 19:00hrs outside Park View. Pedestrian access will be maintained during the works. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while a new water connection is undertaken by South East Water. See <https://one.network/?tm=139843231>
- Temporary Road Closure - Charcott, Leigh - 1st November 2024 for 1 day between Camp Hill and The Greyhound Pub. Pedestrian access will be maintained during the works. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while drainage cleansing works are undertaken by KCC. See <https://one.network/?tm=139834833>.
- Emergency Road Closure - Lower Green, Leigh – date TBC between Pauls Farm and the junction of Well Close. This is to enable drainage repairs to be carried out by KCC. Clerk to request that pedestrian access is maintained as there is a serious safety issue if people cross the tracks to use the access on the other side of the station. This happens when the road is flooded under the railway bridge.

90. To discuss Leigh Village Halls Management Committee's proposals for the village halls

Cllr Kaye reported that the consultation events were held in the large hall on 20th and 21st September. Feedback forms were completed at the consultation and subsequently, and the results of this feedback are awaited.

91. To discuss the cluster Emergency & Resilience Plan for the area

The Clerk reported that the draft plan is being prepared and the next meeting is on Thursday, which she will attend but Cllr Williams will be absent.

92. To hear report of the Coffee Corner project held in the Leigh Scout Hut

The Clerk reported that the next dates are 11th October, 15th November and 13th December from 10.30am to 12.00pm. The Clerk has been in discussion with the PTA about holding a school-focused coffee event on Friday between 8.30am and 10.30am, however there is a school workshop on that day and it has been agreed to postpone the coffee event.

93. Aged Persons Dwellings

i. To hear update on the exterior works at both properties

The Clerk reported that the works have been finished and the properties both look very good. An invoice has been received for the work.

ii. To approve works to replace the shower in No.1 The Bungalows

The Clerk reported that the shower needed to be replaced and unfortunately this was just out of warranty. The cost is £200. Members approved the expenditure.

iii. To discuss the lease renewal for No.2 The Bungalows

The Clerk reported that the lease expires on No.2 The Bungalows on 30th November. Members agreed an increase of 2.684%, the RPI is 3.6%. Helen Breeze's fee for renewing the lease is £100 + VAT and includes extending the deposit protection for a further term.

94. The Old Burial Ground - To discuss installation of information board and bench

Cllr Holt reported that the artwork is nearly ready for the information board. Cllr Marchant said that he has been offered some help in delivering the bench which will need a concrete base.

95. To discuss correspondence received

The Clerk reported that the list of correspondence received has been circulated, and drew members' attention to the following:

- i. Item 2: SDC: Community and voluntary groups urged to apply for funding: SDC's Community Grants Scheme is now open for applications. The scheme provides funding of up to £5,000 for voluntary and charitable organisations that support the health and wellbeing of Sevenoaks District residents. The closing date for applications is 12pm on Wednesday 9th October 2024. Successful applicants will receive their funding in April 2025 and will need to complete their services, activities and projects by the end of March 2026. See www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communitygrants.
- ii. Item 3: SDC has been preparing to introduce a new 'reusable recycling bag' for the majority of homes across the District in place of the current clear sacks. From 23rd September SDC will begin phasing out clear recycling sacks and delivering the 'Reusable Recycling Bags', ready to be used immediately. The new recycling bag is weighted, waterproof and resealable. When full it is approximately 600mm (2 feet) wide by 600mm (2 feet) deep and 900mm (3 feet) high. It holds 190-litres of recycling, about three full clear sacks worth of materials and folds up for easy storage. They are already being used by 130 Councils across the UK and in their trials, SDC found people recycle more with these bags than they would with clear sacks. Introducing the reusable bag will save the Council driving 30,000 miles every year to deliver clear sacks to every household, reducing its carbon emissions. By discontinuing clear recycling bags, it also cuts down on single use plastics. The change will also save over £200,000 a year, helping to protect the Council's frontline services. The new bags will be delivered to properties up until the end of the year and can be used straight away. Residents will be asked to write their house name or number on the bags with a permanent marker. For operational reasons, SDC is unable to include properties using communal bins and flats, and will be writing to households who will not receive a reusable recycling bag. All the information about the new bag roll-out, including a series of questions and answers can be found at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/recyclingbags. SDC's In Shape magazine also provides a range of information about the new.
- iii. Item 4: Email from Tom Tugendhat MP regarding his annual bus survey: "I have a strong desire for more buses serving our community. One of the ways you can ensure our bus services are as good as they can be is by letting me know any issues or concerns you may have. I am always interested to hear the experiences of anyone who uses our local bus routes, including our children."
- iv. Item 6: GACC: Post DCO Briefing & Gatwick Activities - 3rd October 2024 at 7:30 pm. "The Gatwick DCO Hearings finished on 27th August. We're holding an online Post DCO briefing meeting to update on what happened at the hearings, where we need to be active next plus some details of other Gatwick activities such as the Noise Management Board, Airspace Modernisation, Night Flights plus news on the wider world of aviation and its impacts."
- v. Item 7: Email from Lesley Ashmall, Communications Manager at the Office of the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner. The Policing Survey measures how safe people feel where they live, whether they trust the police and how seriously things like antisocial behaviour affects them www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PoliceandCrimePlan2024/.
- vi. Items 8, 9 and 10: three emails from a resident regarding the bracing of the veteran oak tree. See item 87(i) above.
- vii. Item 11: Email from Leigh Football Club: "We have our first vets game this Saturday on The Green. I have a further 4 games arranged across the season from October 2024 to April 2025."
- viii. Item 12: Email from Leigh Performing Arts regarding their application for grant.

96. Finance:

- i. To discuss grant application from Scribbles Pre-School for their garden project
Members discussed this grant application in some detail and it was agreed that it is not possible to give a grant on this occasion as the business plan does not stand up to scrutiny.
- ii. To discuss grant application from Leigh Performing Arts towards their pantomime expenditure
Members agreed to give a grant of £750 net towards this event.
- iii. To discuss the 2023/24 External Audit
The Clerk reported that the annual audit has been concluded with the comment:

“On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met”.

- iv. To consider purchasing and laying a Remembrance Day wreath
Members agreed to purchase a wreath for approximately £20.00
- v. To approve list of payments
Cllr Holt proposed that the list of payments be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Backlog and all were in favour.

97. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

- i. The Clerk reported that the defibrillator at The Forstall has disappeared. Item to be discussed at the November Parish Council meeting.
- ii. The Clerk reported that a new set of Christmas Tree lights will be required this year. Item to be discussed at the November Parish Council meeting.
- iii. Cllr Smith reported that there is a gas leak in the High Street and engineers are in attendance.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be on Monday 4th November 2024 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm

The meeting closed at 10.55pm.

**LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
LIST OF PAYMENTS
October 2024**

Payment				Amount	
Date	Number	Payee	Detail of payment	Inc. VAT	VAT
07.10.24	798	Clerk	Salary	£1,221.03	
07.10.24	799	HMRC	PAYE	£497.57	
07.10.24	800	Clerk	Mileage & reimbursement costs	£148.65	
07.10.24	801	KCC	Pension contribution	£687.07	
07.10.24	802	Helen Breeze Property	Renewal of tenancy No.1 The Bungalows	£120.00	£20.00
07.10.24	803	Luke Saunders	Painting work exterior APDs	£1,995.00	
07.10.24	804	Hever Landscapes Ltd	Maintenance of The Green & areas July	£1,260.00	£210.00
07.10.24	805	Original Tree Surgeons	Pruning work and mulching at Veteran Oak	£2,520.00	£420.00
07.10.24	806	SDC	Hire bulk freighter 14.09.24	£145.50	£24.25
07.10.24	807	SDC	Dog waste bin emptying Jul to Sept 2024	£592.80	£98.80
07.10.24	808	Luke Saunders	Replace shower unit in No.1 The Bungalows	£200.00	
				<u>£9,387.62</u>	<u>£773.05</u>

Signed

Date