

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 3RD MARCH 2025 AT 8.00PM

PRESENT: Cllr A. Backlog, Cllr G. Marchant, Cllr G. Rogers, Cllr G. Southwell, Cllr S. Smith and Cllr B. Williams
APOLOGIES: Cllr J. Kaye (Chairman), Cllr R. Britain, Cllr A. Holt and County Cllr M. McArthur
IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk). District Cllr M. Silander attended the Open Session only.

In the absence of Cllr Kaye members agreed that Cllr Smith would chair the meeting.

Open Session

Report by District Cllr Silander

District Cllr Silander reported as follows:

- SDC approved its budget on Tuesday at £20.3m. At the last minute the council had to find an additional £200,000 in the budget for increased National Insurance contributions. SDC run a ten year budget and costs are spread out and balanced over this period. If SDC joins a unitary authority with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council, it is unsure how SDC's ten year budget will be managed if these councils don't operate in the same way. There is also the question of how debt and risk will be managed once the councils join together as a unitary authority. Adult Social Care will then sit with the unitary authority rather than KCC, and these costs escalate rapidly. SDC's Audit report recommended that the public be consulted on budget proposals but this was rejected by the council.
- The Fawkham Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted, and is now a Statutory Planning Document. However policies contained in the NPPF will override the Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- The Local Boundary Review of the Sevenoaks district has been paused due to unitary proposals.
- Land East of the High Street in Sevenoaks is up for development. This is SDC owned land and the proposals are currently subject to public consultation.

District Cllr Silander left the meeting at 8.20pm.

Closed Session

- 166. Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Kaye, Cllr Britain and Cllr Holt, and their reasons for absence were accepted by the Parish Council. Apologies for absence were also received from County Cllr McArthur.
- 167. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest / Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
Cllr Smith declared a DPI in item 171(i)(i) as she is the applicant for this application for tree works.
Cllr Smith declared an NPI in item 182(ii) as she is a member of Leigh Tennis Club.
Cllr Rogers declared an NPI in item 182(ii) as she is a member of Leigh Tennis Club.
- 168. The minutes of the Leigh Parish Council Meeting held on 3rd February 2025** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Marchant, seconded by Cllr Williams, and all were in favour.
- 169. To discuss the format of the Annual Parish Meeting to be held on Monday 31st March 2025**
Members discussed the agenda for the Annual Parish Meeting.

170. To hear update on the Government's Devolution White Paper to reorganise local government

The Clerk reported that KCC was told by Government on Wednesday 5th February that Kent and Medway had not been selected as one of the areas that would be part of its Devolution Priority Programme. The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution said that the proposals could not be taken forward due to concerns about the size of the population disparity between the two proposed constituent members of the proposed Kent and Medway Combined County Authority and the consequential impact on its governance. The county council elections on 1st May will go ahead as planned. Even though Kent is currently not on the devolution programme, the Government has told council leaders that they must press ahead with their proposals for local government reorganisation, and that all two tier authorities should now make plans to merge to create single authorities, and make structures simpler and more efficient. The leaders of KCC, Medway Council and all twelve district and borough councils in the county now have until 21st March to come up with an interim proposal as to how Kent and Medway could be divided into unitary authorities, with full proposals expected by 28th November. The Government says it remains committed to supporting all areas of the country on a path towards devolution. Town and parish councils will remain in place and it is possible that certain county and district council assets could be devolved to them.

171. Planning

i. To consider applications received

- i. SE/25/00416/WTCA: Old Chimneys, The Green, Leigh TN11 8QL - 2 Limes left hand side of front entrance, re-pollard, to manage the size of the trees in their location. Cllr Smith reiterated her DPI in this matter and took no part in the discussion or vote. Members supported this application.
- ii. SE/25/00415/WTCA: Well Close, Leigh - remove row of conifers along footpath boundary from Well Close to Kiln Lane as they have become a hazard to pedestrians on the public footpath. This is the Parish Council's application. Members supported this application.
- iii. SE/25/00509/HOUSE: 17 Burton Avenue, Leigh TN11 9FB - proposal of a single storey rear extension with associated internal reconfigurations. Members had no objection to this application.

The Clerk reported that since the last Parish Council meeting, the Planning Committee has considered the following applications:

- iv. SE/24/03241/HOUSE and SE/24/03242/LBCALT: Hall Place, Penshurst Road, Leigh TN11 8HH - demolition of ruins of wing to be replaced with new two storey extension with roof lantern. New basement with plant room. Internal swimming pool, internal changes. Members supported this application.

ii. To report SDC planning application decisions:

- SE/24/03162/HOUSE: Alphester, 3 Greenview Avenue, Leigh - hip to gable loft conversion with three roof lights to front and a dormer to rear. Application approved.
- SE/24/02851/FUL: Land East of 3 The Forstall, Leigh - erection of a pair of semi-detached houses. Application approved.
- SE/24/03371/WTCA: The Coach House, Hall Place, Penshurst Road, Leigh TN11 8HH - Works to Trees in a Conservation Area: 1. Cherry: Crown reduction - reducing the height and spread of the tree by up to 1 metre. 2. Holly and Yew - reducing height of ivy covered Holly by 2-3 metres, reduce lateral growth of Yew trees back to boundary of the wall, Decision: No Objection Lodged
- SE/25/00197/WTCA: 31A Well Close, Leigh TN11 8RQ - Works to Trees in a Conservation Area: large bay tree on rear boundary - dismantle tree to leave a stump at near ground level. Decision: Permission/Notification Not Required.
- SE/24/02718/HOUSE: 12 Lealands Avenue, Leigh - removal of existing garage, erection of part single storey, part two storey side and rear extensions, rear balcony, alterations to fenestration. Application refused. Reason: Insufficient information has been provided relating to the presence and protection of bats. As such the, proposal fails to meet the guidance as set out within Circular 06/2005 and is contrary to Policy SP11 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- iii. To discuss the list of settlements in SDC's Draft Settlement Hierarchy
The Clerk reported that SDC has published the draft Settlement Hierarchy which is part of the new Local Plan process. Included in the hierarchy for Leigh parish are Leigh, Charcott, Knotley Hall and Powder Mills, the last three are proposed new additions. The Clerk advised that this is relevant because it is possible that SDC will allocate new housing to be adjacent to existing settlements as listed in the hierarchy. The latest NPPF, released in December, has given an immediate mandatory increased housing target for the Sevenoaks district of 1,149 new homes a year, which is a 63% increase on the current target. As 93% of the Sevenoaks District is Green Belt land it will be difficult to reach this target without some inroads being made into Green Belt land. Much of the district is also designated as National Landscapes (AONB) which affords even greater protection. Not all land in the parish is under a National Landscape and so this could potentially be targeted for development.
- iv. To discuss the SDC bespoke planning training event for Leigh and Chiddingstone Parish Councils
The Clerk advised that the date is Thursday 3rd April from 3.30pm to 5pm in SDC offices.
- v. Request for comments on dropped kerb in Well Close
The Clerk reported that a resident has asked whether the Parish Council would have any comments to make on an application to drop the kerb and widen their driveway. Members had no objection to this proposal.

172. The Green

- i. To discuss the location of the recycling bins at Crandalls
The Clerk reported that she is meeting The Original Tree Surgeons at the yew tree tomorrow and will obtain a quote for the tree works and also laying a hardstanding.
- ii. To discuss provision of grasscrete on The Green
Cllr Marchant reported that the solution would be to lay new grasscrete sections on either side of the seat base, and undertook to obtain a quote for this work.
- iii. To hear report of clearance on the lane to the Church at Porcupine House
Cllr Marchant reported that the lane was cleared on Tuesday 25th February, and the contractor did an excellent job. The invoice to follow.
- iv. Summer Family Fun Play Events
The Clerk reported that the dates have been published and the Clerk has pencilled Leigh in for Friday 15th August from 10.30am to 1.30pm. Members approved the cost of booking a children's entertainer.

173. Highways & Rights of Way

- i. To hear update regarding drainage issues in the High Street and Lower Green
 - i. The Clerk reported that KCC carried out drainage investigative works in the High Street on Wednesday 26th February under traffic lights. The Clerk and Cllr Marchant delivered leaflets to all residents, the village hall and local businesses in the High Street to ask that no cars are parked in the road on the day. KCC were grateful for the Parish Council's help and they are waiting for the full report from the contractor. The Clerk arranged for SDC's street cleaner to attend at the same time as it was a good opportunity to sweep the edges of the road whilst the cars were absent.
 - ii. The Clerk reported that a meeting has been arranged with Highways to look at the levels in the High Street and the impact on the Hall Place wall on 6th March, Cllr Marchant and the Clerk will attend.
 - iii. The Clerk advised that there is no update yet on works in Lower Green.
- ii. To hear update regarding the Leigh Community SpeedWatch Scheme
The Clerk reported that a date to meet and train at the roadside has been arranged for 11th March for three of the volunteers and a second date will be arranged after that.
- iii. To hear update regarding the work to trees and footpath between Kiln Lane and Well Close
The Clerk reported that the approval to fell the conifers has not yet been received from SDC. Once the trees have been felled, work to the path can commence. Clerk to investigate whether CIL funding could cover the work to the path.

- iv. To discuss request for litter pick on areas outside the parish
The Clerk reported that a resident has asked that a litter pick is done along the road from Hildenborough to Morley's roundabout, then up River Hill. Also Ensfield Road from Ensfield Farm towards Tonbridge. Neither of these are in the Leigh Parish. Members suggested that the resident contacts the relevant Parish Councils.
- v. Request for Residents Only Parking
Cllr Marchant reported that residents at Forge Square have asked whether some Residents Only Parking signs could be erected along the road outside the square. Members agreed that the residents would need to send a request to SDC but were concerned that the parking restrictions would not be enforceable and would set a precedent in other areas of the village.

174. Charcott

The Clerk reported that a resident of Charcott has asked if her son can get married on the green in Charcott. Members agreed that this would not be possible as the location is not a registered site for weddings, and they would not approve a request to hold any sort of ceremony on the green as there is insufficient space and parking would be an issue.

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

Cllr Rogers reported that the survey responses are being analysed and the Village Hall Management Committee is currently undertaking a structural survey of the buildings in order to ascertain whether any work is urgently required.

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

The Clerk reported that the Coffee Corner held on 14th February was successful. The next dates are: 14th March (Leigh Tennis Club hosting) and 11th April. 10.30 to 12.00.

177. Aged Persons Dwellings

Members agreed that a smart meter should be installed in both the properties.

178. The Old Burial Ground

None.

179. Aviation

- i. GACC February Newsletter and GACC Newsletter March 1st 2025.
- ii. Aviation Environment Federation: Webinar on Airport Expansion on Wednesday 5th March 2.30-3.30pm.

180. To discuss the Rural Swathe Cutting Contract and approve costs

The Clerk reported that the cost of the two rural swathe cuts has been £7,200. The devolved funding from KCC is £4,950.07. The net cost therefore is £2,249.93. Divided by four parishes, the net cost is £562.48 per parish. For 2025-26, KCC has asked if the cluster wish to continue the service. KCC has asked for a lot more documentation this year, and for next year, they have asked that Chiddingstone Parish Council as the lead parish has its own Health & Safety Policy and to nominate a competent person. Members approved the cost for 2024-25 and wished to continue the provision of this service in 2025-26 within the cluster of parishes.

181. 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 4: SDC: the next CIL Spending Board will be taking place on Wednesday 2nd July 2025. Deadline for applications is Monday 24th March 2025.
- ii. Item 8: Kent Police: Scabharbour Road, Leigh - on Monday 17th February at around 15:20, somebody tried to break into a business property. Crime Report No. 46/28029/25.
- iii. Item 9: Copy email from D.Cllr Silander regarding wild swimming at Ensfield Bridge. If there are any concerns, residents should report by email to community.safety@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

- iv. Item 10: Copy letter from resident to SDC regarding licensing queries relating to the Fleur de Lis Public House.
- v. Item 11: The Clerk reported that she asked Harry Walker for a copy of British Standard BS3998 on tree works and he said that he only had a hard copy and he can't lend it out. The cost to purchase is £290 for a soft copy. Members decided not to purchase a copy.
- vi. Item 12: SDC: Boundary Review: Since the prospect of local government reorganisation has been announced, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has decided that the review of the Sevenoaks District ward boundaries will be paused and draft proposals for new ward boundaries initially planned in mid-May this year will now not happen. At this stage the review hasn't been cancelled and a further update is expected later this year.
- vii. Item 13L Kent Police: February newsletter:
- viii. Item 14: SDC regarding the 80th anniversary of VE Day on Thursday 8th May 2025.

182. Finance:

- i. To consider the level of contribution from the Parish Council to Leigh PCC towards magazine costs
The Clerk reported that Leigh PCC has requested a contribution towards magazine printing costs for distribution to the whole parish twice a year. This is a contribution towards the Parish Council page in the magazine. The normal print run costs £525 per month, and when the magazine and directory is sent to every household in the parish, the printing cost is £600. So the difference is £75, twice a year. Members agreed to give a grant of £150 which will cover the additional cost incurred for circulating the magazine to the whole parish. Proposed by Cllr Rogers, seconded by Cllr Backlog and all were in favour.
- ii. To consider application for grant from Leigh Tennis Club towards coaching Leigh school children
The Clerk reported that Leigh Tennis Club has requested a grant towards the free coaching of Leigh school children. This costs the club £1,711 per annum. Previously, the club made a profit on adult coaching and were happy to subsidise the cost of the children's coaching. However, adult coaching made a loss last year. Last year, the Parish Council gave a grant of £350 towards the children's coaching and the balance was paid by the club. Cllr Smith and Cllr Rogers reiterated their NPIs in this matter. Members agreed to give a grant of £500. Proposed by Cllr Backlog, seconded by Cllr Southwell and all were in favour.
- iii. To consider membership renewal to GACC £10, and grant to GACC to support their work
Members approved the membership renewal to GACC of £10. Members discussed an application for a grant from GACC towards their hard work in connection to fighting expansion proposals at Gatwick Airport. The Parish Council gave a grant of £500 last year. Members agreed to give a grant this year of £600. Proposed by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Marchant and all were in favour.
- iv. To sign a quarterly bank reconciliation
Cllr Smith signed the quarterly bank reconciliation and corresponding bank statements as a correct record.
- v. To discuss Earmarked Reserves
Cllr Williams reported that the Finance Committee have considered the Year End Forecast vs Budget for this year, and made a recommendation to transfer to Earmarked Reserves. In accordance with this recommendation, Cllr Marchant proposed that £3,000 is transferred from the General Fund to the Aged Persons Earmarked Reserve and £3,000 is transferred from the General Fund to the Preservation of The Green Earmarked Reserve, this was seconded by Cllr Rogers and all were in favour.
- vi. To approve list of payments
Cllr Marchant proposed that the list of payments be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Backlog and all were in favour. The Clerk reported that there are two invoices from Landscape Services totaling £2,129.45 including VAT but she has requested information on what the invoices cover but this has not been received. Members agreed to pay this before year end if the Clerk is satisfied that the invoices are correct.

183. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

Cllr Marchant reported that contracts have been exchanged on the sale of the village shop with completion due on Monday. Members agreed that this is an end of an era, and the current shop owners will be sorely missed. Clerk to write letters of thanks to the family and to ask that an article is included in the parish magazine with a photo.

The meeting closed at 9.57pm.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be on Monday 31st March 2025 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm

The next Parish Council Meeting will be on Monday 7th April 2025 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL LIST OF PAYMENTS March 2025

Date	Payment Number	Payee	Detail of payment	Amount Inc. VAT	VAT
03.03.25	840	Clerk	Salary	£1,260.97	
03.03.25	841	HMRC	PAYE	£521.71	
03.03.25	842	Clerk	Mileage & reimbursement costs	£127.38	
03.03.25	843	KCC	Pension contribution	£711.22	
03.03.25	844	Leigh Village Halls	Hall Hire 2024/25	£220.00	
03.03.25	845	Chiddingstone PC	Contribution towards rural swathe contract	£562.48	
03.03.25	846	Chiddingstone PC	Half share telephone and printer costs	£384.33	
03.03.25	847	Weld Done	Repair of metal fencing at veteran oak tree	£390.00	£65.00
03.03.25	548	Leigh PCC	Contribution towards magazine	£150.00	
03.03.25	549	Leigh Tennis Club	Grant towards tennis coaching	£500.00	
03.03.25	550	GACC	Membership renewal	£10.00	
03.03.25	551	GACC	Grant	£600.00	
				<u>£5,438.09</u>	<u>£65.00</u>

Signed

Date