

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 2ND JUNE 2025 AT 8.00PM

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

APOLOGIES: Cllr G. Rogers

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

Open Session

Report by County Cllr R. Mayall

County Cllr Mayall said that he wanted to attend and introduce himself to the Parish Council and residents. He has been in post for a month and has attended various induction courses, but has not as yet joined any committees at KCC. Cllr Kaye welcomed C.Cllr Mayall to his new role.

Report by District Cllr M. Silander

District Cllr Silander said that the Fleur de Lis is up for sale and there is interest locally in considering a community bid for the pub. At SDC's Annual Council Meeting, nine Conservative members changed to form a new West Kent Independent Group, this is likely to have an impact on the decisions made at the district council. Statutory committees have been formed and non-statutory committees will be formed shortly. He added that there is two years before the new unitary authority is formed and SDC will be gearing up in preparation. Waste collections are likely to change in 2026 to include bi-weekly refuse collections and glass collections from the kerbside.

Cllr Kaye reported that the owner of Hall Place has contacted the Clerk and said that he wishes to bid for the Fleur de Lis and asked about the property being listed as an Asset of Community Value. D.Cllr Silander asked to be put in touch with the owner of Hall Place to discuss this in more detail.

Questions from members of the public

1. A resident asked whether a new bench could be purchased and placed on The Green instead of the proposed grasscrete? Cllr Kaye said that it has been agreed already by the Parish Council that grasscrete will be laid and the bench relocated to the Old Burial Ground. Car parking is an issue around The Green and if a vehicle can be parked in this location further off the road, it will protect the area of The Green opposite, which currently is regularly damaged by passing large vehicles.
2. The resident asked if the memorial bench as discussed last month could be placed in this position? Cllr Kaye said that a bench will not be placed in this location for the reasons set out above, also there are enough benches around The Green already.

Update by VolkerStevin and the Environment Agency on the Leigh Flood Storage Area

Cllr Kaye welcomed Elizabeth Faulkner and Josh Hawkins from VolkerStevin also Steffan Granger and Radu Iepure Carolea from the Environment Agency.

Josh said that the south gate at the barrier is in place and working. Electrical work has been completed. The centre gate and dry unit are installed, and electrical work is underway. It is hoped that the final gate will be installed this year. Work to the grass embankments is underway, but due to current conditions, there is poor grass growth. It is hoped that the fence will be removed in the next couple of months. Contractors will return to the cattle arch to finish this area, and hopefully some additional stone will be laid under the bridge and in the dip by the water meadow. The Environment Agency will be carrying out some surveys in this area. Some additional fencing will be installed to deter rabbits and the PROW will remain open during these works.

1. Cllr Backlog asked if the hedges will be reinstated. Josh said that the hedges will be reinstated.
2. Cllr Smith asked if the high fencing through the cattle arch on the left hand side will be removed. Josh said that the fencing will be removed in a couple of weeks when the work has been completed in this area.

3. The Clerk asked for an update on the provision of a defibrillator for the village. Liz said that this has proved to be more costly due to the expense of the defibrillator, external cabinet and installation costs. The Clerk said that the Parish Council would pay for the installation of the cabinet on the cricket pavilion, and it was agreed that VolkerStevin would either give a contribution to the project or purchase the defibrillator and the Parish Council would pay for the cabinet.
4. Cllr Williams asked when the project will finish on site. Josh said that the new gates will all be installed hopefully by the end of 2025, there will then be testing and the project should be finalised in the spring 2026, but this depends upon weather conditions.
5. Cllr Britain asked about the overgrown verge and broken manhole cover at the entrance to the site on Ensfield Road. He said that the grass verge is used for pedestrian access to the railway station and, although this area used to be well maintained, recently it is very overgrown and the access to the site is poor, with signs covered with overgrown vegetation. The broken manhole cover is dangerous and a safety hazard. He added that someone has placed some of the plastic site fencing around the manhole cover but this needs urgent attention. There was a discussion on who is responsible for this area. Radu said that the Environment Agency and VolkerStevin will investigate this and will respond to the Parish Council.

Cllr Kaye thanked everyone for attending and for the useful update.

County Cllr Mayall, District Cllr Silander and 5 members of the public left the meeting at 20.37.

Closed Session

20. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Rogers and her reason for absence was accepted by the Parish Council.
21. **Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest / Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
 - i. Cllr Backlog declared a NPI in item 24(i)(iii) as she is a neighbour to the applicant for this planning application.
 - ii. Cllr Britain declared an NPI in discussions relating to the Environment Agency access on Ensfield Road as he is a neighbour to the site.
22. **The minutes of the Leigh Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 6th May 2025** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Britain, seconded by Cllr Williams, and all were in favour.
23. **To review the following policies:**
 - i. Leigh Code of Conduct
 - ii. Social Media Policy
 - iii. Press & Media Policy
 - iv. Procedure for Handling Complaints
 - v. Procedure for Handling Anonymous Correspondence
 - vi. Planning Protocol and Protocol on Meeting with Developers
 - vii. Mourning Protocol

The above policies were reviewed and approved. Proposed by Cllr Britain, seconded by Cllr Holt and all were in favour.

Members agreed to further review the GDPR policies.
24. **Planning**
 - i. To consider applications received
 - i. SE/25/00918/FUL: Land West of Oakfield Farm, Powder Mill Lane, Leigh TN11 8PZ - erection of a detached dwelling. New access with parking, car port and ev charger. Landscaping, new fencing and creation of pond. Members had no objection to this application and supported the new design of the dwelling which is more in keeping with surrounding properties.

- The Parish Council is however concerned that the higher roof line, together with the proposed new siting, closer to the road and neighbouring property, will have an impact and make the development more prominent.
- ii. SE/25/01329/LBCALT: Hall Place, Penshurst Road, Leigh TN11 8HH - rebuilding collapsed garden shed, rebuilding collapsed wall between service driveway and South Field, replacing roof covering to Cherry Orchard Barn, new five bar gate to southern boundary. Members had no objection to this application. The new five bar gate on the southern boundary is on a new access onto the B2027, so approval may be required from KCC Highways.
 - iii. SE/25/00756/HOUSE: Edgehill, Greenview Avenue, Leigh TN11 8QS - demolition of existing conservatory and removal of existing roof. Part ground floor side extension, new porch, rear extension, new second floor and loft conversion with sky lights. Alterations to fenestration. Replacement of existing garage and shed at rear of property. New vehicular access. Amended: The ground floor extension appearance has been altered on the second floor and loft conversion plan to accurately show its single storey nature in relation to the submitted elevations. Members had no additional comments to make on this amendment.
- ii. To report SDC planning application decisions:
- SE/25/00636/LBCALT: 2 Oak Cottages, High Street, Leigh - to replace french door set with side lights, and to replace 1 Georgian casement window. Application approved.
 - SE/25/00789/HOUSE: Primrose House, Charcott, Leigh - formation of a flat roofed dormer on the rear (east) elevation and rooflight. Application approved.
 - SE/25/01180/FUL: Leigh Post Office, High Street, Leigh TN11 8RL - move the access door to middle of the shop front. Removal of the canopy. Increase in height of fascia sign and external lighting to fascia sign. Application now invalid because additional details are sought in relation to the proposed alterations to the fascia sign and the proposed illumination.
 - SE/25/00897/LDCPR: 4 Knotley Hall Cottages, Tonbridge Road, Chiddingstone Causeway TN11 8JH - erection of two storey rear extension and detached outbuilding. Application refused. Reason: The proposal does not comply with Schedule 2, Part 1, Classes A and B of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) due to:
 - The height of the eaves of the part of the dwellinghouse enlarged, improved or altered exceeds the height of the eaves of the existing dwellinghouse contrary to Class A1 (d) of the General Permitted Development Order.
 - The enlarged part of the dwellinghouse would be within 2 metres of the boundary of the curtilage of the dwellinghouse, and the height of the eaves of the enlarged part would exceed 3 metres contrary to Class A1 (i) of the General Permitted Development Order.
 - The first floor side extension would result in the resulting roof space exceeding the cubic content of the original roof space by more than 50 cubic metres when combined with previous enlargements, contrary to Class B1 (d) (ii) and Class A.1 (iv) of the General Permitted Development Order.
- iii. To discuss whether to undertake a Leigh Character Area Assessment and Neighbourhood Plan
 The Clerk reported that following discussions last month regarding the extension of the National Landscape Area, Chiddingstone Parish Council has asked whether Leigh Parish Council would be interested in attending a meeting with them and Hever Parish Council to see if there is any appetite for undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan to include all three parishes. A Leigh Character Area Assessment would be a useful document in its own right but can lead onto the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Williams said that these two matters can be discussed with the Planning Policy Officer at the meeting with SDC on 10th June. Members agreed to attend a meeting with Chiddingstone and Hever Parish Councils to discuss this issue further.

25. The Green

- i. To discuss land on The Green at Porcupine House
 Members agreed that at the current time there is no impact to the Parish Council's asset which is the lane to the church.
- ii. To discuss and approve timing of the grass cutting on The Green near Porcupine House
 The Clerk reported that it was agreed that the grass would not be cut before 1st June.

The Clerk has been in contact with Leigh in Bloom, who would like the grass to remain uncut for the summer. Members agreed that this would begin to look untidy and will be too hard to cut. It was agreed to cut the grass within a couple of weeks.

iii. Request to use The Green

The Clerk reported that Leigh Scouts would like to use The Green for the 7th Tonbridge Scouts' Annual BBQ on Monday 14th July from approximately 4pm to 8pm. Members approved.

iv. Email from resident

The Clerk reported that a further email has been received from a resident regarding annual tree surveys and risk assessments. Members reiterated their previous response to this resident in that the Parish Council will not engage further with him on these issues.

26. Highways & Rights of Way

i. To hear update regarding the Leigh Community SpeedWatch Scheme

The Clerk reported that the next date is currently 21st June 10am to 11.30am.

ii. To discuss speed reduction measures in the parish

Members discussed the Highways Improvement Plan and the areas to be included in the plan for speed reduction measures. These are as follows:

- i. B2027 Hildenborough Road from the parish boundary at Bid Bridge to the 30mph zone at the entrance to Leigh village. Reduce from 60mph to 40mph.
- ii. Pauls Hill from the end of the 30mph zone at the railway bridge to the brow of the hill. Reduce from 60mph to 30mph.
- iii. High Street, Leigh, traffic calming measures such as road markings or road surface to slow traffic.

iii. To hear update regarding the work to trees and footpath between Kiln Lane and Well Close

The Clerk reported that the conifers have been felled and the path will be laid in June by Hodge Landscapes, confirmation of start date is awaited.

iv. To hear update regarding the rural swathe cutting contract

The Clerk reported that the first swathe cut has just been finished. Sadly the contractor died on the 18th May, but the family wanted to carry on with the contract. Members sent their sympathies for this sad situation.

v. Kent Highways

B2027 Penshurst Road / B2176 Penshurst Lane: road closure for SGN gas network upgrade – commencing Monday 23rd June for approximately three to four weeks. The closure point will change as the team moves along replacing the pipes in the road, starting near the junction with Donkey Field and working along B2027 Penshurst Road towards and then approximately 60m into the junction of B2176 Penshurst Lane. Signed diversions will be in place for affected motorists where roads are closed. Access will be maintained for residents and businesses within the works area where it is safe to do so. The new plastic pipe has a lifespan of 80 years. Clerk to check the online system to see if there are any planned A21 closures during this time.

vi. Email from resident

The Clerk reported that an email has been received from a resident regarding congestion in the High Street. Clerk to respond as appropriate.

vii. Meeting with Highways

The Clerk reported that she and Cllr Marchant had a meeting with Highways on Thursday 15th May, and reported as follows:

- Pothole policy – Highways will respond to reports put on the system, they will mark the pothole and then come back and repair it. KCC will not be liable if they have not been informed of the pothole, otherwise they may settle claims, but details are on their website.
- The High Street in Leigh will receive a full resurface in two sections (i) from the Fleur de Lis to Hildenborough Road, and (ii) from the Fleur de Lis to Penshurst Road. These won't take place until 2026/27 depending upon funding.
- Coppings Road drainage work is booked in to clear the gullies.
- If the road is under 6.2m wide, there will be a road closure, rather than a traffic light system.

- Coordination of road closures, this is often out of their hands as there may be a booked road closure and then an emergency one is arranged by the utility company, there is nothing they can do about this.
- If the Parish Council think that signage for road closures is incorrect, contact should be made with the person who manages the utilities. She can also arrange for the Pubs and Businesses remain open signs.
- The overgrown trees on Hildenborough Road, which pushes vehicles in the road, Clerk to log on the system.

27. To hear update regarding the Hildenborough Medical Group's Patient Participation Group

Cllr Smith reported that the quarterly PPG meeting was held on 23rd May, and there has been a request made for the medical group's newsletter to be included in parish magazines as part of their wider distribution plans. The latest newsletter highlights the change in the process of booking appointments as the NHS app can no longer be used for this purpose. The medical centre has applied for permission to use two more consulting rooms in order to ease waiting times. There is also a push to coordinate a carers forum, with an event being held in Leigh if the Parish Council is supportive, and possibly one in Sevenoaks Weald. More details to come. Members were happy for a link to the newsletter to be included in the parish magazine and Clerk to send details to the editor when available. Members were also happy to support the carers forum event.

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

The Clerk reported that the Coffee Corner held on 9th May was successful. The next dates are: 13th June, 11th July and 15th August. 10.30 to 12.00

29. Aged Persons Dwellings - to discuss potential work to No.2 The Bungalows

i. Already Approved Work

i. Quote for repair to bedroom ceiling: £850

ii. Quote to repair crack above window in bedroom: £295

ii. Insulation

The Clerk reported that she contacted SDC and under the Warm Homes grant scheme the Parish Council could be eligible for 100% of the cost of insulation on the first property and 50% on the second property. There would be a survey to see what is required. There was a query on how the application is made as a Parish Council, and SDC has now said that there may be a better grant, this is called Connected for Warmth. The properties have to satisfy the EPC and council tax requirements (Band D or under) and the grant will provide all the funding for the insulation. SDC has put forward the two addresses, with the Clerk's email address as contact, although the residents may have to apply themselves with assistance.

30. Aviation

The Clerk reported that emails have been received from Gatwick Obviously Not, the Aviation Environment Federation and the CAA/DfT, which have been circulated. Members agreed to respond to the consultation on the additional comments on Gatwick's Northern Runway proposal to the planning inspectorate.

31. To hear update regarding the Charcott phonebox refurbishment

Cllr Holt reported that the refurbishment of the phonebox has completed, and it looks very good. The Parish Council has already approved a contribution of £250, which will be paid upon receipt of an invoice. The contractor kindly gave some time free of charge, and the remainder of the cost will be covered by fund raising and a kind donation from The Greyhound Inn. The contractor also painted the letter box, and the landlord of The Greyhound has offered to make a new noticeboard, which is much appreciated.

32. The Old Burial Ground

Cllr Holt reported that the sign is currently being printed. Clerk to collect and information board to be erected shortly.

33. Summer Family Fun Day

The Clerk reported that this is booked for Friday 15th August from 10.30 to 13.30 on The Green. The entertainer has been booked for 3hrs at £275.

34. 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: High Weald National Landscape Partnership: High Weald Nature and Community Fund now open for new applications – deadline Monday 15th July. The Fund offers support for work that benefits nature and people across the High Weald National Landscape, including the villages and towns in and around it. Grants range from £500 up to £20,000, with larger amounts available for large-scale, multi-year projects. highweald.org/grants/high-weald-fund. The High Weald Nature and Community Fund aims to:
 - Create wildlife-friendly spaces like community gardens, pocket parks, allotments, orchards, and school growing areas, especially in towns and villages.
 - Enhance habitats through pond creation, wetlands, tree and hedge planting, wildflower meadows, and wildlife boxes.
 - Support habitat restoration, including hedge-laying, coppicing, and removing invasive species.
 - Engage communities in managing green spaces, volunteering, and provide training for conservation projects.
 - Improve access for underrepresented groups, including young people, those with physical or mental health challenges, and people living with disabilities.
- ii. Item 4: CPRE's invitation to the first virtual Town Hall event taking place on Tuesday 3rd June, 4:30-6pm. The Clerk and Cllr Smith to attend.
- iii. Item 5: SDC News Releases:
 - (i) "Cllr Lynda Harrison became Chairman of SDC on Thursday 15th May 2025. Lynda has spent her entire life living in Bromley and Kent, including the past 28 years in West Kingsdown. Lynda has chosen to support two Chairman's charities this year, 'Head in the Game' and 'Friends for families'.
 - ii) A Hartley resident who put up two buildings in the Green Belt without planning permission, then refused to comply with a planning enforcement notice, has been fined £20,000 by Sevenoaks Magistrates. He was also ordered to pay a £2,000 victim surcharge and £250 towards the costs of bringing the case.
 - (iii) SDC considers changes to recycling and waste collections. This follows 'The BIG waste conversation' on which over 4,000 responses were made. SDC is now considering the introduction of alternate weekly waste and weekly food waste collections from 1st April 2026. This would improve recycling rates and enable kerbside glass collections. Alternate weekly collections would also free up resources for more recycling options. SDC is also considering providing residents with free wheelie bins for their waste and recycling from summer 2026. New glass recycling collections could begin at the same time. They may also introduce additional home recycling collections such as textiles and small electrical items. The district's current recycling rate is only 37%, which is much lower than many areas and a long way from the Government's national recycling target of 65% by 2035. The recycling and waste collection proposals will be considered by the SDC's Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee on 5th June 2025, Cabinet on 12th June 2025 and by Full Council on 22nd July 2025.
- iv. Item 6: Sharon Gray, South East Community Rail Partnership: invitation to the Tonbridge, Redhill & Reigate steering group meeting on Teams on 3rd June. Cllr Britain to attend.
- v. Item 8: Email from Leigh Primary School to school parents, copied to the Parish Council regarding works to the school playing field from Monday 12th May. Cllr Holt reported that sadly the school is dropping one class due to a reduction in pupil numbers.
- vi. Item 10: Email from VolkerStevin: "We'd be happy to arrange a site visit to the Leigh site for a small group of no more than four people, should there be any interest from council members."
- vii. Item 12: Email from Leigh Primary School with a request for grant. Item to be discussed at the July Parish Council meeting.

- viii. Item 16: Email from PC John Donegan to say that he would like to meet a representative of the Parish Council on Friday 6th June to talk about any concerns or worries there may be.
- ix. Item 17: Kent Police: May report.

35. Finance:

- i. To sign a quarterly bank reconciliation
Cllr Kaye signed the bank reconciliation and corresponding bank statements as a correct record.
- ii. To approve membership renewal to Society of Local Council Clerks: £180
Cllr Britain proposed that this membership be renewed. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and all were in favour.
- iii. To discuss application for grant by the Leigh Village Horticultural Society
The Clerk reported that a grant request for £500 has been received towards marquee hire, which will cost £2,142. Members approved a grant of £500. Proposed by Cllr Backlog, seconded by Cllr Holt and all were in favour.
- iv. 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.

36. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

The grant application for Leigh school.

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

The meeting closed at 10.30pm.

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL LIST OF PAYMENTS June 2025

Payment				Amount	
Date	Number	Payee	Detail of payment	Inc. VAT	VAT
02.06.25	882	Clerk	Salary	£1,260.97	
02.06.25	883	HMRC	PAYE	£584.73	
02.06.25	884	Clerk	Mileage & reimbursement costs inc domain renewal	£154.73	£4.15
02.06.25	885	KCC	Pension contribution	£711.22	
02.06.25	886	SLCC	Membership renewal (shared with Chidd)	£180.00	
02.06.25	887	HMRC	Penalty for late file of PAYE return	£100.00	
02.06.25	888	Leigh Village Hort. Society	Grant	£500.00	
				£3,491.65	£4.15

Signed

Date