

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2025 AT 8.00PM

PRESENT: Cllr J. Kaye (Chairman), Cllr R. Britain, Cllr A. Holt and Cllr S. Smith
APOLOGIES: Cllr A. Backlog, Cllr G. Marchant, Cllr G. Rogers, Cllr B. Williams and County Cllr R. Mayall
IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk). District Cllr M. Silander and 5 members of the public attended the Open Session only.

Open Session

Report by County Cllr Mayall

In the absence of County Cllr Mayall, the Clerk read his report:

- i. Local Government Reform (LGR): The Reform UK KCC administration is sceptical about the benefits of LGR and whether it will produce any cost savings or benefit local democracy. However, we are obliged to do this by central government. As mentioned before KCC is pursuing an LGR scheme where Kent will remain as one unitary authority. Other Kent district councils are in favour of schemes which involves dividing Kent up into 3 or 4 unitary authorities. The benefit of the KCC scheme is that it will not involve the disaggregation of large departments such as social care into 3 or 4 smaller unitary authorities which is estimated to cost around £40 million and will entail greater annual costs due to the need to duplicate the management of such departments and economies of scale will be lost. The councillors of the single unitary authority would represent their local areas in 3 regional assemblies. Sevenoaks will fall within the West Kent Area Assembly. These assemblies would have authority over such things as libraries, highways and housing. This is an attempt to balance cost savings with maintaining local democracy and decision making. KCC must submit this proposal to the government by 28th November. One problem is who will carry the responsibility for the amount of debt that each current district council carries with it. Dover, Gravesham and Canterbury each have debts of between £100 and £200 million. Ashford has debts of £260 million. Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Councils have no debt.
- ii. Climate Change Declaration: KCC has rescinded the Climate Emergency Declaration. This will save £32 million in building modifications over 4 years. The Council is also discarding the net zero plan to transition the KCC vehicle fleet to all electric vehicles which will save £7.5 million. It means KCC can now use the services of local businesses based in Kent who could not afford to employ various lawyers and do all the necessary box ticking that larger companies were able to do. This can expect to produce further cost savings for KCC. No doubt not everyone will be happy about this, but Reform was elected with a substantial majority to do things differently which is exactly what we are doing.
- iii. Debt Repayment: Kent County Council has paid back a £50 million long term debt 40 years early. This will save £670,000 in debt interest each year.
- iv. Member's Grant: I am looking for good causes within the Sevenoaks Rural South Division to spend my member's grant on. Please let me know of any worthy uses in and around Leigh."

Report by District Cllr Silander

District Cllr Silander reported that Cabinet has approved a project to borrow money in order to fund the building of a new hotel in Swanley, at a cost of £18.5m. The Finance & Investment Advisory Committee was not consulted on this decision, yet to go before of full council. There has been a vote of no confidence in the leader of SDC and the matter will be considered at an Extraordinary District Council meeting on 16th October. The Draft Local Plan consultation has been published and includes no sites for proposed developments in the Leigh parish.

Cllr Holt joined the meeting at 8.08pm.

Questions from members of the public

1. Resident 1 said that he saw a BBC4 programme on a 400 year old oak tree which said that rolling and spraying The Green should not be done as this could impact the trees.
2. Resident 2 said that signs should be put out prior to spraying to inform the public. Cllr Kaye said that the Parish Council has agreed that this will be done next time. Cllr Smith said that the Parish Council has agreed to review the type of spray and the frequency.
3. Resident 1 asked whether the netting around the cricket square could be removed and asked that the previous system of the rope around the square be returned. Also whether the hosepipe could be put away after use.
4. Resident 3 agreed about the netting and the hosepipe and offered to remove these herself, which the Parish Council warned was not a good idea as the items do not belong to her.
5. Resident 2 asked for copies of correspondence with the Health & Safety Executive. Cllr Britain said that as this request appeared to relate to the veteran oak tree, the Parish Council had previously agreed that it will no longer engage with this resident on this matter, and the Parish Council has informed the resident accordingly. (Clerk's Note: see Leigh Parish Council minutes of meetings January 2025, February 2025, May 2025, June 2025 and July 2025).
The resident said that he felt that he is entitled to these documents, but Cllr Britain said that due to the nature of the resident's requests and behaviour, the Parish Council has resolved that these are vexatious. However, the Parish Council will consider the resident's request for this information but if the Parish Council determines that the request is in connection to the veteran oak tree or the other related matters that fall under the decision previously made and determined to be vexatious then the information will not be forwarded to the resident. The resident will be told of the Parish Council's decision within the statutory timeframe.
6. Resident 4 asked who owns Cherry Tree Cottages. Cllr Holt said that this is Leigh United Charities.

District Cllr Silander and 2 members of the public left the meeting at 8.35pm.

Closed Session

72. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Backlog, Cllr Marchant, Cllr Rogers and Cllr Williams and their reasons for absence were accepted by the Parish Council. Apologies for absence were also received from County Cllr Robert Mayall.
73. **Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest / Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
None.
74. **The minutes of the Leigh Parish Council Meeting held on 1st September 2025** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Britain, seconded by Cllr Smith, and all were in favour.
75. **Planning**
 - i. To consider applications received
 - i. SE/25/01310/FUL: Land West of Hale Oak Farmhouse, Hale Oak Road, Sevenoaks Weald TN14 6NQ - conversion of agricultural building to a single two storey dwelling with patio area and balcony. Creation of hardstanding, parking, landscaping and associated works (adjoining parish consultation). Members had no comment to make on this application.
 - ii. SE/25/02010/HOUSE: The Watch House, Burton Avenue, Leigh - erection of double garage with pitched roof and associated hard and soft landscaping. Members agreed to consider this application and respond prior to the deadline.
 - iii. SE/25/01928/CONVAR: Sparrowhawks Equine Crematorium, Sevton Farm, Powder Mills, Leigh TN11 9AR - Variation of conditions 2, 3, 5, 9, 10 & 12 of 22/00026/CONVAR to modify consent to include domestic pet cremations.
Additional documentation has been submitted by the applicant in response to comments submitted. Members agreed the following response:

Leigh Parish Council has considered the additional documentation submitted by the applicant and members are concerned about the probability of additional traffic movements if domestic drop off or pick up is permitted. The Parish Council suggest that a condition be attached to any approval that states that pets must be picked up and ashes dropped off to vet practices only.

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

- iv. SE/25/02571/WTCA: The Old Burial Ground, Leigh - various works to trees. Members supported this application.
- v. SE/25/02586/WTPO: 6 Garden Cottages, Leigh - mature oak tree encroaching on rear boundary from neighbouring property - remove epicormic regrowth, right canopy of crown, reduce several lower laterals back to boundary line. Left side of crown, reduce lateral, remove any deadwood from lower crown. Members had no objection to this application.
- vi. SE/25/02587/WTPO: 7 Garden Cottages, Leigh - Ash - tree on rear boundary, repollard stem, remove lower branch from main ash stem to lift crown. Members had no objection to this application.

ii. To report SDC planning application decisions:

- SE/25/01328/HOUSE and SE/25/01329/LBCALT: Hall Place, Penshurst Road, Leigh - rebuilding collapsed garden shed, rebuilding collapsed wall between service driveway and South Field, replacing roof covering to Cherry Orchard Barn. Applications approved.
- SE/25/01981/HOUSE: 41 Burton Avenue, Leigh - single storey rear extension with rooflights. Alterations to fenestration. Associated hardscaping. Application approved.
- SE/25/01805/HOUSE: 8 The Square, High Street, Leigh - prefabricated free standing garden room. Application approved.
- SE/25/00621/FUL: 4 The Green Lane Leigh Kent Development: Demolition of existing garage and erection of new dwelling (Use Class C3) with associated curtilage, landscaping, access, parking and other associated works. Application approved.

iii. To discuss application to renew the listing of the Fleur de Lis as an Asset of Community Value

The Clerk reported that the Asset of Community Value designation remains in place despite the change in ownership. The listing is attached to the property itself rather than the owner, meaning the protections and obligations associated with the Asset of Community Value status continue to apply under the new ownership. Should the new owner wish to make any changes that could affect the community use of the asset, they would still be subject to the relevant provisions under the Localism Act 2011. The current listing expires on 9th December 2025. Members agreed to submit a new nomination.

iv. To discuss the SDC Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation

The Clerk reported that SDC has published the list of sites to be included in the Regulation 18 consultation for the Draft Local Plan. These have already been discussed by SDC's Development & Infrastructure Advisory Committee on 23rd September and will now go to the Cabinet on 9th October, there will then be a Regulation 18 consultation from 23rd October to 11th December. It is possible for new sites to come forward and these will be included in the Regulation 19 consultation. Members agreed to submit a response to the consultation regarding the site in Chiddingstone Causeway because part of the site is located in Leigh parish. The response to be considered at the November Parish Council meeting.

76. The Green

i. To discuss the lighting of the beacon for Bonfire Night on Saturday 8th November

It was agreed to invite the food vans to the event and ask the Leigh Community Club to run a bar. The beacon will be lit at 7pm.

ii. To discuss the replacement of the bin by the beacon on The Green and associated cost

The Clerk reported that the cost of a metal bin including installation by SDC is £1,200. Members agreed to leave this for now due to the high cost.

- iii. To discuss request for a replacement tree on The Green by the WI
The Clerk reported that the WI silver birch tree has sadly died and they have requested that a new one be planted close to the bench on the slope opposite Porcupine House. Members agreed that the Clerk and Cllr Smith should discuss this with The Original Tree Surgeons as part of the tree survey.
- vi. To hear report of a meeting with the Health & Safety Executive
Cllr Kaye reported that he, Cllr Smith and the Clerk met two officers from the HSE on Monday 29th September. The officers looked at the tree and reviewed all the documentation connected to it. The officers are civil servants and their role is see whether procedures have been followed. They have since responded to the Parish Council to say that no further action is required to be taken by them.

A resident left the meeting at 9.09pm.

- v. To discuss maintenance of The Green and any associated cost
Cllr Kaye reported that the Cricket Club has sent photos of the condition of The Green, these were circulated to all members. There are bare patches which will need attention and it was agreed that the school should be asked to use different parts of The Green so that other areas can recover.

77. To discuss the provision of a new defibrillator on the cricket pavilion

The Clerk reported that no response was received from the Managing Director of VolkerStevin despite chasing. Clerk to chase again. Members reiterated their concerns at the lack of action by VolkerStevin on various points that have been raised many times, namely that the fencing has not been removed, the dip has not been filled in on the footpath by the cattle arch, hedgerows have not been restored and the entrance to the site on Ensfield Road is very messy. If no response is received from VolkerStevin, members asked the Clerk to contact Tom Tugendhat, MP.

78. Highways & Rights of Way

- i. To hear update regarding the Leigh Community SpeedWatch Scheme
The Clerk reported that two sessions were held in the month, both on Penshurst Road, one in the 30mph zone and one in the 40mph zone.
- ii. To hear update on speed reduction measures in the parish
The Clerk reported that traffic surveys were carried out by KCC on Hildenborough Road, Ensfield Road, Penshurst Road and Powdermill Lane. The results are not yet known.
- iii. To note temporary road closures in the parish for Remembrance Day
The Clerk reported that the High Street, Hildenborough Road, Lower Green and Powdermill Lane will be closed on 9th November 2025 between 9.25am to 10.00am and 10.45am to 11.35pm.
- iv. Road Closures
 - Urgent Road Closure - Ensfield Road, Bidborough and Leigh - 15th October 2025 for up to 1 day between Lower Green Road and Hayesden Lane. This is to enable pothole blitz carriageway patching works to be carried out by KCC.
 - Temporary Road Closure: Ensfield Road, Leigh - 20th October 2025 for 2 days between 8.00am and 6.00pm from approximately 40m north west of the entrance to Ensfield Farm. The closure is required while the replacement of one existing telegraph pole and rehang associated cabling works are undertaken by Openreach.

79. To hear update on the proposed refurbishment of Leigh Village Halls

Cllr Kaye reported that two architect firms have been approached to see if they would be interested in tendering for the work. A fund raising event has been arranged.

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

The Clerk reported that Coffee Corner held on 19th September was very successful. The next dates 10th October and 14th November 10.30 to 12.00.

81. Aged Persons Dwellings

i. To discuss the vacancy at No.1 The Bungalows

Members discussed the sad passing away of the tenant in No.1 The Bungalows. The Clerk said that she has been in touch with the tenant's family. Clerk to advertise vacancy in November parish magazine and noticeboards/social media.

82. Aviation

- i. GACC newsletter: "GACC expresses deep disappointment and alarm at today's decision by the Secretary of State to approve Gatwick Airport's Development Consent Order for the expansion of its Northern Runway. This decision paves the way for a second operational runway in all but name, with the potential to increase Gatwick's annual flight numbers by over 55,000, significantly expanding the airport's capacity and environmental footprint. GACC will now challenge this irresponsible decision."
- ii. SDC News Release: Sevenoaks District Council has raised concerns about the recent approval of a second runway at Gatwick Airport. The Council responded to a Government consultation about the possible expansion of the airport in March 2024. In its response, the Council recognised the expansion could have both positive and negative impacts for its communities. The Council stated it is supportive of the project in principle, particularly in relation to the significant economic benefits the expansion could bring to the local tourism industry. However, it remained concerned about the significant negative social and environmental impacts that its communities living in the south of the District would have to endure. The Council insisted these negative impacts should be mitigated properly to ensure its communities' health, wellbeing and quality of life is not adversely affected in the long term. The Council also wanted clarity on the deliverability of the airport's stated net zero ambitions and, linked to this, requested further consideration be given to the wider infrastructure needs generated by the airport expansion, in particular road and rail.

83. The Old Burial Ground: application for works to trees in the Conservation Area/with TPOs

The Clerk reported that the application for tree work has not yet been determined. The quote is £1,350 + VAT and a contribution from a resident has been agreed. Members accepted the quote and work can commence when approval received from SDC.

84. 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: KALC Training events:
 - Planning: Planning Appeals and Enforcement: 9th October 18:30
 - Standards Conference 2025: 23rd October 10:00
 - Planning Policy v Material Considerations: 23rd October 18:30
 - Planning Policy Update: 12th November 6.30pm-7.30pm online
 - Climate Change and Planning: 20th November 6.30pm-7.30pm online
 - Design Codes and Design Guidance: 4th December 6.30pm-7.30pm online
 - The Essentials of being a Good Employer: 16th June 10.00am-12.00pm online.
- ii. Item 3: KCC re: bus shelter grants, applications sought, deadline 31st October 2025.
- iii. Items 4 and 5: Kent Police August and September reports.
- iv. Item 5: Kent Police September report:
- v. Item 6: PC John Donegon: Leigh update:
 - Leigh continues to report low crime levels compared to much of west division.
 - We have been patrolling day and into late/night patterns around and in the area.
 - A closure order has been submitted to a house in Leigh as the occupant has negatively affected the other residents in the area quality of lives. (A closure order rests on a court decision where the occupant can argue his case).
 - We want to support the NHW which has been started in Leigh, if anyone involved would like further help let us know.

- vi. Item 7: SDC re: waste collections: "Sevenoaks District Council is investing £9 million to increase the variety of goods it collects from residents, whilst making its waste collection service more cost-efficient and better for the environment. For the first time, the Council will also start collecting glass from most properties, eliminating the need for residents to take their glass bottles and jars to a bottle bank. The first changes will be introduced from April 2026 when dedicated separate weekly food waste collections will begin. Most households (except those living in flats) will be provided with two food caddies, a small one for the kitchen and a larger one to be kept outdoors for food waste collections. Food waste collected separately will go to a specialist 'anaerobic digestion' plant where bacteria break down the food, producing natural biogas. The gas is captured and used for cooking, electricity production and other purposes. This process also creates compost and soil conditioners used in farming. It is the most cost-effective way to deal with food waste. The Government has also placed new requirements on councils to boost recycling rates and consistency across the country, which requires a dramatic change in the way SDC collects waste. In order to accommodate the new glass collections, separate food waste collections, and maintain the existing general rubbish and recycling collections, the Council will need to move to alternate weekly collections for black and recycling waste. Alternate weekly means collecting general waste one week and recycling the next week. Food waste collections will continue to take place every week. Alternate weekly collections will be introduced from summer 2026. Most residents (except those living in flats and certain properties situated away from the road) will get two free wheelie bins, one for general waste, the other for recycling plastics, tins and metals and the new glass collections. New home recycling collections from the kerb, such as textiles, small electrical items and other materials, will also be introduced, further improving the range of goods that can be collected from nearly every resident's front door. Residents living in flats should also see improvements to their communal recycling facilities with the introduction of new recycling banks for food waste, textiles and small electrical items in future years. The total cost of the service improvements is £9.05 million. This breaks down as £6.6 million for new waste collection vehicles, £2.09 million for wheelie bins and £360,000 for food containers. The Council will receive a £4.7 million grant from central Government to help introduce the changes. The Council had previously budgeted £2.5 million to update its aging waste collection vehicles. Running new vehicles will save nearly £300,000 in repairs and maintenance over three years. The Council is also expected to sell the retired vehicles for around £150,000. The remaining £1.4 million will be saved over seven years as the new service will be more cost-effective and efficient.
- vii. Item 8: Email from the Kent Downs National Landscape re: fingerpost refurbishment.
- viii. Item 9: SDC re: Local Government Reorganisation.
- ix. Item 10: SDC: West Kent Business grant scheme: to apply for a £500 grant, you must be:
- a registered business within Sevenoaks District, Tonbridge & Malling Borough, or Tunbridge Wells Borough
 - registered with West Kent Business
 - able to explain how, if successful, you would use the £500 grant to help your business grow and/or improve productivity
- The combined fund of £15,000 will be split equally across the 3 local authorities (£5,000 per local authority).
- x. Item 15: Kent Police: Ensfield Road, Leigh - on Friday 19th September between 17:00 and 23:17, somebody broke into a stable, nothing appears to have been stolen.
- xi. Item 16: Kent Pension Fund: "Further to the consultation on the potential pooling of parish and town councils for LGPS funding purposes, this matter was considered by the Fund's Pension Fund Committee at their meeting on 23rd September 2025.
"The outcome of the Committee's decision is to fully pool parish and town councils for LGPS funding purposes from 1 April 2026."
- xii. Item 17: Invitation to KALC's 78th Annual General Meeting, to be held on Saturday 22nd November 2025.
- xiii. Item 19: Email from District Cllr Silander asking if there are any projects that the Parish Council would like his help to achieve during the remainder of his term of office at SDC.

- xiv. Item 20: Environment Agency – update on works to the Leigh Barrier: “work at both sites is still progressing well with the new centre gate at the Leigh control structure installed over the summer. The north gate has been removed and we expect to lift in the final new gate in the coming weeks. At Hildenborough the new concrete walls for the pumping station structure are almost complete and work is continuing off-site to manufacture the new pumps and develop the new control system. We expect to install both of these in the coming months.”
- xv. Item 22: KCC: Kent's Draft Strategic Statement: Reforming Kent 2025-2028: “This sets out the aims and objectives of KCC over the next three years and replaces the previous Strategic Statement. It is shorter in timeframe due to the Government's proposals for Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of new council structures in Kent and Medway in 2028. However, this shortened timeframe does not weaken or limit our ambition for Kent. Our commitments to residents are that we will:
- Keep council tax increases as low as possible but will maintain the quality-of-service provision.
 - Ask the difficult questions and challenge long held assumptions within KCC.
 - Not accept the status quo where it fails our residents whether as service users or taxpayers.
 - Have a ruthless focus on value for money, cost efficiency and common sense.
 - Expect those who we support to respect the services and monies provided to them.
 - Reward those who work hard and achieve on merit rather than tick boxes.
- The draft Strategic Statement is focused on establishing a reformed council and is centred on four aims that are structured around the areas of greatest challenge and opportunity, each of these are supported by a number of objectives and priorities. The four aims are:
- Putting Kent residents first
 - Reforming Kent County Council
 - Supporting residents that need help
 - Building better communities
- For each of the objectives the document sets out the local context, why this matters to Kent, whilst outlining the priorities the Council will address. Please provide your comments on the draft Strategic Statement using the feedback form.”
- xvi. Item 23: CPRE: “My purpose in contacting you at this point, is two fold:
- To assure you that CPRE Kent will be responding to the consultation on the Sevenoaks Local Plan. The CPRE Sevenoaks District Committee and the CPRE Kent Planners are already working on our comments. The CPRE response to the last plan was 21 pages long and I'm sure that the response this time will be equally robust.
 - We at CPRE in Sevenoaks District are alarmed about the effect of the new ‘grey belt’ policy on our District's countryside.
- Part of Green Belt policy is ‘protecting the countryside from encroachment’ but the government says that that part of the policy cannot be taken into account in deciding what is or isn't grey belt. The result is that the Sevenoaks Local Plan about to go for consultation says: ‘Due to the dispersed settlement pattern in this area, with many smaller settlements, villages and hamlets, much of the Green Belt in the District can be identified as grey belt (as the effect of the definition of grey belt is now to focus Green Belt protection on land near towns and large built-up areas). That could mean a lot of our countryside being lost to development of all kinds. CPRE is lobbying government to change the policy. Anyone in agreement with these concerns can make their views felt by signing the petition <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/725558> The CPRE website contains a wealth of information that is helpful in relation to Planning, and gives access to CPRE's in depth reports and studies. See the September 2025 State of Brownfield document.”

1 member of the public left the meeting at 9.54pm.

85. To discuss and approve update to Risk Assessment

Members discussed and updated the risk assessment on The Green.

86. To adopt the KALC Community Award Scheme 2026

Members adopted the 2026 KALC Community Award Scheme and Clerk to seek nominations through the parish magazine.

87. Finance:

i. To hear report of the 2024/25 External Audit

The Clerk reported that the External Audit report has been received and states: "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 to come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met."

1 member of the public left the meeting at 9.58pm.

ii. To note changes to the Clerk's salary in line with the NALC agreed salary scales and backdate to 1st April 2025

The Clerk reported that the agreed NALC salary scales have been circulated which must take effect from 1st April 2025. The increase is 59p per hour, which equates to 3.23%. This will be backdated to 1st April 2025. Members approved.

iii. To consider purchasing and laying a Remembrance Day wreath

Members approved the purchase of a Remembrance Day wreath.

iv. To approve list of payments

Cllr Holt proposed that the list of payments be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Smith and all were in favour.

v. VAT refund 2024-25

The Clerk reported that a VAT refund has been received of £6,126.02.

88. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

None.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be on Monday 3rd November 2025 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm.

The meeting closed at 10.20pm.

**LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
LIST OF PAYMENTS
October 2025**

				Amount	
Date	Payment Number	Payee	Detail of payment	Inc. VAT	VAT
06.10.25	923	Clerk	Salary	£1,491.19	
06.10.25	924	HMRC	PAYE	£728.00	
06.10.25	925	Clerk	Mileage, office exp, zoom subscription	£300.29	£27.28
06.10.25	926	KCC	Pension contribution	£850.43	
06.10.25	927	SDC	Bulk refuse freighter visit 13.09.25	£152.77	£25.46
06.10.25	928	Hever Landscapes Ltd	Mowing The Green and areas July	£900.00	£150.00
06.10.25	929	Helen Breeze Property	Tenancy renewal No.1 The Bungalows	£120.00	£20.00
06.10.25	930	Vision ICT Ltd	Provision of emails & migration to new system	£165.00	£27.50
				<u>£4,707.68</u>	<u>£250.24</u>

Signed

Date