

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON MONDAY 2ND FEBRUARY 2026 AT 8.00PM

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

APOLOGIES: Cllr A. Holt

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk). County Cllr R. Mayall attended the meeting from 8.23pm to 8.28pm.

Closed Session

- 138. Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Holt and her reason for absence was accepted by the Parish Council.
- 139. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest / Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
None.
- 140. The minutes of the Leigh Parish Council Meeting held on 5th January 2026** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Rogers, and all were in favour.
- 141. Planning**
- i. To consider applications received
None. The Clerk reported that the Planning Committee discussed and approved the response to the following application since the last meeting:
 - i. SE/25/03432/FUL: Garages on Eastern Side of Greenview Avenue, Leigh TN11 8QS - demolition of existing garages, erection of one dwelling with associated works. The Planning Committee considered the plans and submitted the following comments: Leigh Parish Council has in general no objection to the application however there are some specific concerns, one of which relates to the scale of the development, a second parking and others, during any construction phase, which might be better dealt with by conditions. We are concerned that for a 3 bedroom, 5 person house, as proposed, the garden space is not of a sufficient size and not in character with the local area. Also, the site currently provides off-road parking for 2+ cars and these cars plus any new resident cars in excess of the 1 off-road parking space provided in the plans will further exacerbate the parking problem in Greenview Avenue and around The Green. During any construction phase we would, as with any development in the area, be concerned with the safe movement of vehicles past the school at the eastern end of The Green; protecting the veteran oak at the western end and allowing unhindered traffic movements around The Green and in Greenview Avenue. We would ask that should the application be permitted a condition be applied that requires a Construction Traffic Management Plan that ensures construction traffic, particularly any larger and over-height vehicles, are routed via the eastern access to The Green, off the High Street, to avoid any damage to the veteran oak. For safety reasons, timing of the movement of vehicles should avoid school drop-off/collection times. In addition, provision for parking and loading/unloading should take account of the need to maintain access to Greenview Avenue and Lealands Avenue for all traffic but in particular larger vehicles such as Council waste lorries.
 - ii. To report SDC planning application decisions:
 - SE/25/03331/PIP: Land South of The Old Stables, Knotley Hall, Tonbridge Road, Chiddingstone Causeway – Permission in Principle for the erection of dwellings with a minimum of 1 or maximum of 1 net dwellings. Application approved.

- SE/25/02864/WTPO: Gowers, The Green, Leigh TN11 8QL - Works to Trees covered by a TPO - Silver Birch bottom right hand corner. This tree is in decline - fell to ground level. Application approved.
 - SE/25/03149/WTCA: South View, The Green, Leigh TN11 8QR - Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Horse Chestnut showing signs of honey fungus due to fruiting bodies around the base and cambium breakdown. Black spots on the main stem. Fell to ground level and grind resulting stump. No Objection Lodged.
 - SE/25/01962/HOUSE: 12 Lealands Avenue, Leigh - demolition of single-storey garage, existing rear single-storey extension, storeroom and gate. Erection of side and rear double storey extension with first-floor balcony. Alterations to fenestration. Application approved.
- iii. To report planning appeal decisions
 Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/W/25/3367917: Land to the south of Greenview Avenue, Leigh, TN11 8QT. The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission by Whitehall Homes LLP against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council. The application reference is SE/22/02495/OUT. The development proposed is the erection of up to 39 dwellings. The appeal is dismissed. The Planning Inspector concluded: "Although the proposal would not be inappropriate in the Green Belt, would not be likely to harm the veteran oak tree, and would secure required contributions to affordable housing and the public rights of way network, it would compromise highway safety and I give considerable weight to the conflict with policy T1 in that regard. It would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no other considerations, including the provision of the Framework and the other benefits set out above, that lead me to a conclusion other than in accordance with the development plan. As such the appeal is dismissed."
- iv. To discuss SDC's Local List Supplementary Planning Document of heritage and non-heritage assets
 The Clerk reported that she attended a meeting held by SDC about the district Local List and Town and Parish Councils have been asked to consider nominating items to be included. The Local List can include heritage assets and non-heritage assets that are important to the community, such as maybe the war memorial, the Charcott heritage phone box, pillboxes, the Hall Place wall, the Pump House, the horse trough on The Green and also the one by the wall in the High Street. The assets can be privately owned or in public places. It was agreed to set up a working party of Cllr Holt, Cllr Rogers, Cllr Backlog and Cllr Smith to take this forward. Cllr Williams suggested creating a Google survey to allow residents to put ideas forward.

142. The Green and parish maintenance areas

- i. To approve quote for hedge cutting at Well Close
 The Clerk reported that a quote has been received from RWE Rural Services: to trim new growth from both faces and height of new Thuja hedging to an even line. The existing Leylandii leading on from this: reduce, taking an even line approximately 2m. above the fence on the inside, to the height of where it has been trimmed. Cut roadside face back as hard as possible without browning. Gently trim inside face of Leylandii to tidy. Quote £700 + VAT. Members approved the quote.
- ii. To hear update regarding the provision of grasscrete on the edge of The Green and the extended paving area in Crandalls
 The Clerk reported that an email has been received from resident regarding the new grasscrete section on The Green expressing concern about a blocked ditch and excess surface water that drains into the brick culvert. Cllr Kaye advised that he responded to say that the blocked drains on private land require attention and the grasscrete will give an even porous surface which will improve the area. The Clerk reported that the work will commence in the middle of February.
- iii. To hear update regarding the glass recycling banks in Crandalls
 The Clerk reported that SDC has advised that the glass bottle banks will be removed when glass collections from home commence in October, and communications will be sent out at that time.
- iv. Remembrance Bench
 Cllr Kaye reported that he has received a very nice email of thanks for the repair of the bench.
- v. Use of The Green
 The Clerk reported that she, Cllr Kaye and Ian Bishop had a meeting with the school regarding the use of The Green.

The school has agreed to move their PE sessions around The Green so that it is not over-used, in three locations, one to the north of the cricket square and two to the west of the cricket square. The school said that they are not able to use the school playing field because it takes too long for the children to walk there and sport-time is therefore reduced, also at the moment the ground is too wet, and there are no toilets, although the tennis club do allow the school to use their facilities. The school were advised that the Parish Council has agreed to fence-off a section of The Green when re-seeding is carried out.

143. Highways & Rights of Way

i. To hear update on speed reduction measures in the parish

The Clerk reported that KCC has responded to her email to say that Stocks Green Road was reduced to 40mph in 2016 and unfortunately Hildenborough Road would not meet the current DfT criteria. A 40mph limit would have poor compliance given the nature and speed of the road being a B classified route. The Clerk has requested a copy of the approval made in 2016 for the Stocks Green Road speed reduction.

County Cllr Mayall joined the meeting at 8.23pm and members agreed to suspend the meeting to hear his report.

Open Session

Report by County Cllr Mayall

County Cllr Mayall reported that the KCC draft budget will be discussed by full council on 12th February. If approved, this will increase KCC's portion of the council tax by 3.99%. This has been made possible through £100 million in savings, and there are no cuts to Council services. At the same time the Council's debt has been reduced by £67 million. The increase in council tax that the Reform-led council inherited from the previous Conservative administration was anticipated at being 4.99%. In the case of Labour-run Medway Council, the council tax is most probably going to have to go up by 4.99%, borrowing has risen by £81 million and their debt has increased from £552 million to £634 million in one year. Cllr Backlog asked how these savings could be made without cutting services. C.Cllr Mayall said that this is possible through efficiency savings such as discontinuing with the net zero project which created higher costs. C.Cllr Mayall asked if there are any pothole or other issues he can report for the Parish Council. Cllr Swallow said that Greenview Avenue was closed on Friday without notice and some, but not all, potholes were repaired. However the repair on one pothole has already washed out.

Cllr Mayall left the meeting at 8.28pm and the Closed Session resumed.

Closed Session

ii. Leigh Community SpeedWatch

The Clerk reported that the volunteers have been out twice in the last month and one was arranged but cancelled due to weather conditions. On both occasions no-one was found to be speeding. This information has been relayed to the Police.

iii. To discuss the parish litter pick to be held on Saturday 28th February

Cllr Kaye reported that volunteers will meet on The Green at 9.30am on Saturday 28th February. It was agreed that a second litter pick on Ensfield Road can be done when the road is next closed in order to protect the safety of volunteers.

iv. Public Rights of Way

Cllr Kaye reported that he sent an email to KCC PROW regarding the footpath MT45 from Home Farm to Meopham Bank. The response was that a request could be made to the Environment Agency for consent to run a boardwalk through the underpass, which is in flood zone 3, the highest level, so the structure would need to be a cantilever directly off the concrete wall of the underpass. This would also require approval from National Highway's structural engineers and two landowners. Funding of such a project would require consideration.

144. To hear update on the Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough Expansion Scheme

The Clerk reported that she has sent an email to VolkerStevin requesting an update on the outstanding matters. Members agreed that mixed native hedging should be used when the new hedging is planted.

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

Cllr Kaye reported that the firm of architects have been engaged and they have undertaken to prepare an initial scheme within the next 6-8 weeks. Members discussed the governance of the village halls and Clerk to send copies of the Land Registry Title documents to the project team.

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

- i. The Clerk reported that the Coffee Corner held on 16th January was very successful. The next dates are 13th February, 13th March and 10th April 10.30 to 12.00.
- ii. Members approved the Scout Hut hire charge of £30 per session in 2026 which equates to £360 for the year. Proposed by Cllr Britain, seconded by Cllr Marchant and all were in favour.

147. Aviation

The Clerk reported that newsletters from GACC have been received and included in the correspondence list. The four-day judicial review hearing in the High Court has ended, and the judgement is awaited.

148. Aged Persons Dwellings

- i. The Clerk reported that the new tenant moved into no.1 The Bungalows on 17th January and all going well. The Clerk has called an electrician out to look at the outside sensor lights which are not working properly.
- ii. Insulation: The Clerk reported that she has heard back from SDC on the Warm Homes Grant. SDC said that the two properties are still on her waiting list, and are getting nearer to the top. There will be further funding soon as part of the new Warm Homes Plan.
- iii. Cllr Williams advised that it will be a requirement by 2030 to have an EPC rating of C or above, but it is important to note what has been spent in energy saving initiatives until then.

149. 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 asking for nominations to the Voluntary and Community Awards.
- ii. Item 5: SDC: "From 23rd October to 11th December 2025, the public were asked to share their views on proposed Local Plan policies and development sites to meet the Government's new compulsory housing target for the District – a 63% increase on the previous target. They were also asked for their opinions on the Government's new designation of 'Grey Belt' in the District. Around 5,000 people and organisations took part. A total of 1,150 people also attended 30 face-to-face 'Pop-up' sessions that took place at 10 locations across the District where Council staff were on hand to answer questions. SDC will publish all the Local Plan comments on its website later in the New Year. All the comments will then be analysed and considered before SDC publishes a final draft, the Regulation 19 Publication, of the Local Plan in summer 2026 for further public comments. This version of the Local Plan will be submitted to Government for examination by end 2026."
- iii. Item 8: Kent Police: Barnetts Road, Leigh - on Sunday 18th January between 12:00 and 13:00 somebody tried to break into a residential property. Crime Report No. 46/10506/26

150. Finance:

- i. To hear report of the Finance Committee meeting held on 26th January and approve minutes
The Clerk reported that the Finance Committee met on 26th January and minutes have been circulated and will be posted on the website. The minutes were approved, proposed by Cllr Kaye, seconded by Cllr Britain, and all were in favour.
- ii. To discuss 2025-26 Accounts and 2026-27 Budget & Precept requirements
The Clerk reported that the Finance Committee looked in detail at the actual expenditure and year end forecast vs budget and at the budget for 2026-27. Cllr Kaye said that the Kiln Lane path and the removal of the conifer trees were unexpected expenditure.

The Committee has proposed a recommendation to the Parish Council that the budget be approved and that a precept of £58,000 be set for 2026/27. This is a 5.696% increase and for a Band D property the annual increase would be £3.24. Proposed by Cllr Rogers, seconded by Cllr Swallow and, at show of hands, this recommendation was unanimously approved.

iii. To discuss the 2025-26 Interim Internal Audit report

The Clerk reported that the Interim Internal Audit was carried out on 13th January and the report has been received and circulated. The report states: “Our sample testing did not uncover any errors or misstatements that require reporting to the external auditor at this time, nor did we identify any significant weaknesses in the internal controls such that public money would be put at risk. It is clear the council takes governance, policies and procedures seriously and I am pleased to report that overall, the systems and procedures you have in place are fit for purpose and whilst my report may contain recommendations to change these are not indicative of any significant failings, but rather are pointers to improving upon an already well-ordered system. It is therefore our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Leigh Parish Council are well established and followed.” The following recommendations were made:

- i. That committee agendas and minutes are added to the website and a diary of meetings for 2026 is updated. The Clerk said that the Finance Committee minutes will go on the website.
- ii. That the Risk Assessment matrix identifies what constitutes high medium or low risk for consistent evaluation. The Clerk said that this will be included in the next review.
- iii. That the council’s Finance Regulations are updated to reflect current practice. The Clerk said that this will be included in the next review.

iv. To approve Small Village Hall hire costs for 2025-26

The hire costs for 2025-26 for the Small Village Hall of £220 was approved, proposed by Cllr Swallow, seconded by Cllr Smith, and all were in favour.

v. To approve contribution from the Parish Council to Leigh PCC towards magazine costs

Members approved a contribution of £600, proposed by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Marchant, and all were in favour.

vi. To approve list of payments

Cllr Backlog proposed that the list of payments be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Marchant and all were in favour. The Clerk reported that a contribution of £750 has been requested for works to trees in the Old Burial Ground.

vii. Bank Signatories

Members agreed to make Cllr Swallow a bank signatory as he is a member of the Finance Committee and agreed to set Cllr Holt up as an admin user so that she can input payments if required.

151. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

- i. Members discussed the laurel growing over the fence from the gardens of Greenview Avenue partly blocking the pavement on The Green Lane. Clerk to write to all residents in Greenview Avenue asking them to check their rear boundaries for overhanging vegetation that may be interfering with the pavement.
- ii. Clerk to report holes in the pavement at Crandalls.
- iii. Cllr Backlog undertook to speak to a resident in Meadow Bank who has a fence that is leaning into the path and ask them to straighten up the fence.
- iv. The Clerk said that an application for a grant by the school will be on the agenda for the March Parish Council meeting, and also a grant to Leigh Tennis Club towards the tennis coaching sessions for Leigh school children.

The next Parish Council Meeting will be on Monday 2nd March 2026 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

**LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
LIST OF PAYMENTS
February 2026**

Date	Payment		Detail of payment	Amount	
	Number	Payee		Inc. VAT	VAT
21.01.26	966	Imperative Training Ltd	Defibrillator pads	£172.80	£28.80
02.02.26	967	Clerk	Salary	£1,341.32	
02.02.26	968	HMRC	PAYE	£618.24	
02.02.26	969	Clerk	Mileage, coffee corner	£103.29	
02.02.26	970	KCC	Pension contribution	£743.97	
02.02.26	971	Hever Landscapes Ltd	Cut hedge at the triangle	£180.00	£30.00
02.02.26	972	Teambase	Stationery	£85.18	£14.20
02.02.26	973	Mulberry Local Authority Service	Interim Internal Audit	£270.78	£45.13
02.02.26	974	Helen Breeze Property Manage	New tenancy fee for APD1	£960.00	£160.00
02.02.26	975	The Original Tree Surgeons	Tree work in Old Burial Ground	£1,620.00	£270.00
02.02.26	976	Leigh Village Hall Man Com	Hall Hire 2025/26	£220.00	
02.02.26	977	Leigh Scout Group	Scout Hut Hire 2026	£360.00	
02.02.26	978	Leigh PCC	Contribution to parish magazine	£600.00	
02.02.26	979	Leigh Cricket Club	Weed spray for whole Green	£320.00	
				<u>£7,595.58</u>	<u>£548.13</u>

Signed

Date