

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE SMALL VILLAGE HALL, HIGH STREET, LEIGH ON TUESDAY 7TH APRIL 2026 AT 8.00PM

- PRESENT:** Cllr J. Kaye (Chairman), Cllr A. Backlog, Cllr G. Marchant, Cllr S. Smith, Cllr R. Swallow and Cllr B. Williams
- APOLOGIES:** Cllr R. Britain, Cllr A. Holt, Cllr G. Rogers, County Cllr R. Mayall and District Cllr M. Silander
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs L. Kleinschmidt (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

Open Session

Report by County Cllr Mayall

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

- “I have had a response back about the removal of trees on Greenview Avenue. Please see below. It appears that they were dead or in a sickly state.
 - “Greenview Avenue was recently inspected as part of the 5 year KCC Tree Safety Assessment regime at the start of March. The lime tree at the end of the avenue has a job raised to be felled due to the significant basal decay that was observed. It looked as though a previous stem was removed some time ago or physical damage which has in turn led to decay which has advanced since the last inspection. Given the location, in close proximity to the houses there was no viable option for retention. Due to the nature of the verge and possible conflicts with the larger private tree, I will not seek to re-plant here. KCC also only has a small piece of the end of the verge. A fell notice was added to the tree which fulfils our obligation under the duty to consult legislation. Unfortunately, we are unable to inform Parish Councils, local councillors or individual residents of planned works as we simply do not have the resource to do so. Where the trees are located in Conservation Areas or subject to TPO's we inform the planning department of the District Council who may inform other interested parties as part of their consultation process.
 - We have recently undertaken a number of new plantings along Greenview Avenue and are obliged to share the plantings around the district. That being said, we are aiming to add some further new trees close to the Environment Agency depot on Powder Mill Lane, close to the Tonbridge bypass bridge.
 - The small tree towards The Green was removed as this was dead. A tree planting request has been logged for this to be replaced, hopefully in the coming 2026/27 planting season that runs from November to March.”
- I haven't had much of a response as to why residents weren't told of the road closure on Greenview Avenue. I went to look at it myself a couple of weeks ago, and it appeared to be in fairly good condition as far as I could see. There were some square patches that looked like they had been correctly filled.
- I have not heard anything back from KCC Highways about the 235 bus service withdrawal but I will try to find out more as soon as possible.
- I have enquired about the drainage situation on Greenview Avenue as well and am waiting for a response.”

Questions from members of the public

1. A resident who has joined the Village Hall Renovation Committee discussed with the Parish Council the responsibility for the defibrillator on the Village Hall, the relationship between the Parish Council as Custodial Trustee and the Village Hall Management Committee as the Management Trustees and who the registered owners are of the Scout Hut and the Pavilion.
2. A resident asked for information on the withdrawal of the 235 bus service. The Clerk advised that she has received notification that the service will be withdrawn on 29th June. The Parish Council has asked County Cllr Mayall for more information, and the Clerk undertook to forward this onto the resident when received.

3. A resident asked about the school's use of The Green. Cllr Kaye advised that the Parish Council has not said that the children are not allowed on The Green, but we have had meetings with the school in order to seek their co-operation and agree how they can use The Green. There have been two exceptionally wet winters and an exceptionally hot summer in between and the surface of The Green has suffered. Work is required to repair the ground, which has now been vertidraind, seeded and rolled but in order for the seed to germinate the school were asked not to use The Green for two weeks which led to the school Easter holidays, meaning that the school would not use The Green for a month. This would give the seed a chance to germinate. In addition, there are a couple of areas that have suffered from over-use, and the school has been asked not to use these areas until further notice to allow them to fully repair. After the Easter holidays, the school has been asked to use the football pitch area for lunchtime play and lunchtime clubs, and an area to the north-east of the football pitch for lunchtime clubs if the football pitch is being used for lunchtime play. Once The Green has recovered, the Parish Council will again contact the school and give permission for other parts of The Green to be used. Cllr Kaye added that the Parish Council has asked the school to make better use of their own playing field in Lealands Avenue, but the school said that it takes too long to walk there for a PE lesson.
4. The same resident asked about the damage to the Openreach cable under The Green and who could be contacted for compensation. Cllr Swallow said that providing residents have contacted their service provider to tell them that they have no service, there is a daily amount of compensation that will automatically be applied to their account until service is resumed. Cllr Kaye said that the responsibility solely lies with Openreach because the cable under The Green was lying literally just under the grass and not to the required 300mm depth. Cllr Swallow said that he had regular contact with the engineers working on site. The discarded cable appeared to be left in the trench and the Clerk undertook to enquire on this point. Cllr Marchant reported that the trench has been re-dug and new cable has been laid at a depth of 350-400mm. It was agreed that the Clerk will obtain a map showing the route of the telecoms cables under The Green and Cllr Swallow and Cllr Marchant undertook to mark the route on a map to protect the area in future.

2 members of the public left the meeting at 8.20pm.

Closed Session

167. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr Britain, Cllr Holt and Cllr Rogers, and their reasons for absence were accepted by the Parish Council. Apologies for absence were also received from County Cllr Mayall and District Cllr Silander.
168. **Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/Non-Pecuniary Interest on matters to be discussed**
Cllr Kaye declared a DPI in item 174(i)(iii) as he is the applicant in this application for tree works.
169. **The minutes of the Leigh Parish Council Meeting held on 2nd March 2026** were approved and duly signed. Proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Williams, and all were in favour.
170. **To discuss the Annual Parish Meeting to be held on Monday 27th April 2026**
Members discussed and agreed the format of the Annual Parish Meeting.
171. **To review and update Risk Assessment**
The Clerk reported that the following amendments have been made:
 - i. Risk 22 – removed 'Risk of fall and injury on path between Kiln Lane and Well Close. This is due to raised tree roots creating an uneven surface.' The footpath has been replaced and no longer creates a hazard.
 - ii. Risk 22 – added in Financial Risk of damage to cables under The Green whilst maintenance works on The Green carried out.The Internal Audit carried out in January 2026 included a recommendation for a heat map to be included in the Risk Assessment and the Clerk advised that this is already in place, and copies were circulated to all members. Members agreed to update the Risk Assessment accordingly, proposed by Cllr Backlog, seconded by Cllr Swallow, and all were in favour.

172. To review and update Standing Orders

Members reviewed the Standing Orders and agreed that no changes were required.

173. To review and update Finance Regulations

The following changes were approved, proposed by Cllr Marchant, seconded by Cllr Smith, and all were in favour. The changes are as recommended by the Internal Auditor in January 2026.

- 1.16. In these financial regulations the term 'proper practice' or 'proper practices' shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - a Practitioners' Guide (England)* issued by the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG), available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC). This is changed to read:
 - 1.16. In these financial regulations the term 'proper practice' or 'proper practices' shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - a Practitioners' Guide (England)* issued by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP), available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC).
- 2.2. On a regular basis, at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member other than the Chair or a cheque signatory shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO. The member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification. This activity shall on conclusion be reported, including any exceptions, to and noted by the Finance Committee.

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174. Planning

i. To consider applications received

- i. SE/26/00738/LDCPR: Fair Acre, Powder Mill Lane, Leigh TN11 8PZ - construction of three single storey outbuildings to the rear of the site. Exact siting and dimensions shown on proposed drawings. Members had no objection to the provision of the proposed three outbuildings but wished to comment that the property is located within the Green Belt, whereas the application says that it is not, and to request that no toilet facilities are allowed in the outbuildings which should be incidental to the main dwelling, and the services should therefore be available in the main dwelling only.

The Clerk reported that the Planning Committee discussed and approved responses to the following applications since the last meeting:

- ii. SE/26/00257/FUL: Land East of Eggpie Cottage, Egg Pie Lane, Sevenoaks Weald TN14 6NP - demolition of existing buildings, mobile home and oil tank. Part removal of sand school. Erection of 1 self-build dwelling with landscaping to also include fencing, new gate and path. Biodiversity Net Gain. New parking to existing dwelling and new dwelling. New vehicular access to Eggpie Cottage. (Adjoining parish consultation). Leigh Parish Council objected to this application on the following grounds, in support of comments made by Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council:
 1. Para 2.2 of the Planning Statement to this application makes reference to the removal of the unattractive mobile home, a significant detracting feature of the site. It should be noted that it is a condition of planning application 21/01666/FUL that this mobile home be removed and therefore its removal is not relevant to consideration of the present planning application.
 2. The new residents claims a modest 10% reduction in the footprint compared with the previously approved building on this site but the footprint of the new building does offset the harm to the Green Belt and National Landscape by the addition of a first floor to the proposed new building.

3. Previous Officer reports make note of the low level of the currently approved buildings in assessing the acceptability of that development. This low level is not matched by the proposed new building.
 4. NPPF 5, delivering a sufficient supply of homes would not appear relevant to this proposal since planning has already been granted to residential conversion and confirmation of commencement of the development has been granted 24/01835/LDCEX.
 5. Therefore there be no net gain in housing by granting this current application compared with the previously approved application. Changing the status of the land to Grey Belt would not free up the land for development, nor is it a sustainable location as required for Grey Belt development.
 6. Where a replacement building is allowed, NPPF considers excessive increases in volume or footprint inappropriate, even in Green Belt land. Whilst there is a modest decrease in footprint in this case, the addition of a first floor results in a substantial increase in volume of the new building compared to the previously approved building.
 7. Even if the land in question is reclassified as Grey Belt this does not override or weaken the protection given to the National Landscape status (footnote 7 rule). The significant increase of this proposed building by introduction of a first floor does not meet the policy requirements if NPPF para 189.
 8. Within a National Landscape, planning authorities must give “great weight” to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. This comes from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and reinforced by the NPPF.
 9. This application should be refused as it increases the visual impact of the building by the addition of a first floor.
 10. The application does comply with Policy GB4 although figures have not been provided by the applicant to show the total floor area. The maximum floor area to comply with GB4 would be 201.12 m sq (the original floor space being 134.07 m sq). The proposed ground floor area measures 174.9 m sq. The floor area of the first floor has not been provided but is estimated at approx. 140 m sq so would result in an increase of approx. 235% from the original floor area.
 11. SDC’s draft Local Plan does not consider the site is question as Grey Belt land.
- iii. SE/26/00679/WTCA: Old Kennards, Hildenborough Road, Leigh TN11 8RE - complete removal of one conifer. This application had already been approved by SDC and therefore no comment was submitted.
 - iv. SE/26/00582/LDCPR: 33 Penshurst Road, Leigh, TN11 8HL - extension of existing dropped kerb. Members had no objection to this application.
 - v. SE/26/00559/HOUSE: 21 Barnetts Road, Leigh TN11 8QH - resurfacing of existing front hard standing area. Installation of a dropped kerb and vehicle crossover to provide lawful vehicular access from Powder Mill Lane. Associated hard and soft landscaping. Members objected to this application on the following grounds: The supporting documents refer to resurfacing existing hard standing. This is not correct as the hard standing has only been added within the past month or so with the current refurbishing of the property. It was previously a garden surrounded by a hedge, all of which has been grubbed out. The property is within the Leigh Conservation Area and trees have been removed, as far as we are aware without permission. There is no indication that any new features have been added that are at all sympathetic to biodiversity. Clerk to add a further comment that the ditch has been filled in to make the hardstanding area and there is concern about adequate surface water drainage.
- ii. To report SDC planning application decisions:
 - SE/25/03424/LDCPR: Fair Acre, Powder Mill Lane, Leigh TN11 8PZ - Lawful Development Certificate Proposed for single storey rear extension with rooflight. Removal of chimney. Alterations to fenestration. Application approved.
 - SE/26/00258/WTPO: Gowers, The Green, Leigh TN11 8QL - Works to Trees covered by a TPO Mature Ash tree to the left of the house: due to the presence of fungus and the tree displaying signs of stress, crown reduction of approximately 30-40%. Application approved.
 - SE/25/03124/HOUSE: Applebys, Tonbridge Road, Chiddingstone Causeway - installation of 24no. free standing solar panels. Application approved.

175. The Green and parish maintenance areas

- i. To hear update regarding the provision of posts at the extended paving area in Crandalls
Cllr Marchant reported that the work has been done and an invoice from Hodge Landscapes is due.
- ii. To hear update regarding maintenance of The Green
See Open Session above.
- iii. To hear report of damaged telecoms cable under The Green
See Open Session above.

176. Highways & Rights of Way

- i. To hear update on speed reduction measures in the parish
No update.
- ii. Leigh Community SpeedWatch
The Clerk reported that the volunteers have been out three times in the last month. It was good to see that vehicles were travelling within the speed limit generally, which shows that the scheme is beneficial. It was agreed that more volunteers are required and Clerk to post on social media.
- iii. To discuss felling of tree by KCC at end of Greenview Avenue and removal of newly planted tree
See Open Session above.
- iv. To hear update on the rural swathe 2026 contract
The Clerk reported that the contractor has said that his price may increase slightly due to increase in fuel costs, and has agreed to supply an amended price a price a week before he is due to start the round, which will be end April, beginning of May.
- v. To discuss the withdrawal of bus service 235 from Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells
See Open Session above.

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

- i. The Clerk reported that VolkerStevin has kindly provided a new defibrillator, and the Finance Committee agreed to purchase an external cabinet for erection on the front wall of the Pavilion on The Green. The installation by an electrician is due and members approved the cost.
- ii. Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough Embankment Scheme newsletter: "In summary, the team has continued to make good progress over the autumn and winter period, despite the challenging weather conditions. The final new gate has been installed at the Leigh control structure, and the team are busy connecting it up to the electrical systems. At Hildenborough, the team has finished installing the trash screen, handrails, pumps and platforms. They've also carried out an initial test of the system."
- iii. Cllr Smith said that some of the fencing is still on site and Clerk to ask for an update.

One member of the public left the meeting at 9.10pm.

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

Cllr Kaye reported that there will be a presentation on the plans at the Annual Parish Meeting. The architects have prepared three options for consideration.

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

The Clerk reported that the Coffee Corner held on 13th March was very successful. The next dates are this Friday 10th April, 15th May and 19th June 10.30 to 12.00.

180. 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 3: Email from Leigh School, thanking the Parish Council for the grant.
- ii. Item 4: Email from Leigh Tennis Club, thanking the Parish Council for the grant.
- iii. Item 6: Various correspondence regarding the tenancy of a property in Meadowbank.
- iv. Item 7: SDC News Release: Council gears up for new weekly food waste collections: "SDC will begin delivering food waste caddies to around 50,000 households from Monday 30th March 2026, ahead of the launch of its new weekly food waste collection service.

“From Monday 27th April 2026, most residents will be able to recycle their food waste at the kerbside every week, on the same day as their normal waste collections. Before the start of the new service, households will receive two food waste caddies - a small grey caddy for indoors and a larger black and orange caddy for outdoors. They will also receive a roll of caddy liners to get them started and a leaflet explaining how to use the service. The new service will help residents to reduce the amount of waste placed in their black sacks, benefiting the environment and saving taxpayers' money. Once collected, the food waste will be taken to an anaerobic digestion plant, where it will be turned into renewable energy and nutrient-rich fertiliser. Food waste makes up around a third of household waste and is one of the heaviest things we throw away. When it ends up in black sacks, the weight pushes up disposal costs, and it is sent for incineration. Incineration destroys valuable nutrients, produces avoidable emissions, and offers poor value for taxpayers. By collecting food waste separately, it can be recycled instead, protecting the environment and saving over half a million pounds a year to help safeguard funding for local services. Residents are asked to put their black and orange outdoor food caddy at the kerbside by 7am on their usual waste and recycling collection day from 27th April 2026. Caddies should not be put out before the service starts. To help residents prepare for the new food waste service, SDC will host three information roadshows in April. Staff will be on hand to answer questions, demonstrate how to use the caddies and explain what can be recycled. The roadshows will take place at:

- Edenbridge - outside Waitrose - Saturday 11 April, 10am to 2pm
- Swanley Market - Wednesday 15 April, 10am to 2pm
- Sevenoaks – under the clocktower in Bligh's - Saturday 18 April, 10am to 2pm

For more information about food waste collections, visit www.seveoaks.gov.uk/foodwaste.”

- v. Item 10: Kent Police: Cinder Hill Lane, Leigh - between 00:15 on Sunday 29th March and 00:01 on Wednesday 1st April, somebody tried to steal a car from the road. Damage was caused. Crime Report No. 46/51726/26.

181. Finance:

- i. To approve reimbursement to resident for spring plants for the Powdermills planter
The Clerk reported that a resident buys plants for the planter. The amount due is £35.02. Members approved the expenditure and were grateful to the resident for her help.
- ii. To discuss renewing the 3 year long term agreement with Mulberry Local Authority Services Ltd
The Clerk reported that the current 3 year long term agreement includes the 2025-26 year but from 2026-27 a new agreement is required. Members agreed to renew the 3 year agreement.
- iii. To consider contribution towards cost of fence repair on the permitted path at Knotley Hall
Email from Charlotte Pearson-Wood, Batcheller Monkhouse regarding the repair/replacement of the fencing at the permissive path from Knotley Hall to the layby opposite St. Luke's Church in Chiddingstone Causeway. The quote for the work is £630 + VAT. Members agreed to offer to pay half the cost, ie £315. Proposed by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Backlog and all were in favour.
- iv. To consider request to pledge a grant towards Kent ACRE's work with village halls
Kent Action with Communities in Rural England: “Village halls sit at the heart of rural life. They are the places where people meet, stay warm, take part in activities, access support and feel part of a community. Yet many halls are under increasing pressure, run by volunteers, facing rising costs, trying to meet growing local need with limited resources and struggling to find new trustees. Kent ACRE www.kentacre.org.uk is the Kent member for Action with Communities in Rural England www.acre.org.uk. Kent ACRE strives to strengthen rural areas of Kent and Medway by making critical resources accessible at the heart of the community, fostering support and inclusion for all. Over the past year, we have supported more than 100 halls across Kent and Medway to improve their governance, update their policies and procedures, and find funding to refurbish and improve their hall facilities. Four village halls, Cowden, Lamberhurst, Newington in Folkestone and Saltwood, were supported to win funding from DEFRA's Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund enabling them to complete significant refurbishment projects including renewing roofs, installing energy efficient heating systems and refurbishing kitchens and toilets. However, we want to do more. Kent ACRE is now launching a crowdfunded programme spearheading the evolution of village halls into vibrant community hubs, ensuring essential services reach rural areas.

“Building on our existing expertise in governance, facilitation, community engagement and fundraising, we aim to transform these spaces into local support centres or community hubs. This will address crucial needs like mental health, domestic abuse support, employment and other vital services often unavailable outside urban centres. Partnering with NHS mental health services, the National Institute for Health and Care Research, other agencies and various charities, we will deliver tailored aid directly to communities. We will work closely with parish councils, community wardens, and local groups to identify and prioritise services, ensuring no one is left behind.

This programme will help village halls to:

- strengthen governance, safeguarding and volunteer confidence
- expand local activities, warm spaces and social groups
- host accessible health and wellbeing support, including mental health, domestic abuse and financial advice
- build a clearer understanding of local needs through a countywide survey
- ensure halls and parish councils can better engage and support their residents

We are writing to ask whether your council would be willing to support this work by:

- making a pledge to the crowdfunder and/or
- sharing the campaign with your residents, hall committees and local groups.

Even a modest contribution from parish and town councils sends a strong message of local commitment and helps unlock wider community support. Every pound raised goes directly into strengthening rural community infrastructure and improving access to services for the people who need them most. Until the full target of £71,771 has been reached, any donation will take the form of a pledge only. Spacehive will hold all donations in escrow until the campaign has ended, and return all commitments to each donor if the full target has not been reached. We would be very grateful if you could consider supporting the campaign and helping us spread the word. If you would like more information, a briefing for councillors, or materials to share locally, we would be happy to provide them.” Members agreed to pledge £300. Proposed by Cllr Smith, seconded by Cllr Backlog and all were in favour.

v. To approve list of payments

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

vi. Sign cleaning service

The Clerk reported that she has been contacted by a young person locally who is starting up a business cleaning road signs. Members were interested and agreed to discuss this further.

182. Items for reporting or inclusion in future agenda

Cllr Backlog asked whether Peshurst Road could be resurfaced from Lower Green to the junction with Leigh Road. Clerk to make the request with KCC Highways.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be on Monday 27th April 2026 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm

The Annual Parish Council Meeting will be on Tuesday 5th May 2026 in the Small Village Hall at 8.00pm

The meeting closed at 9.34pm.

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

Date	Payment Number	Payee	Detail of payment	Amount Inc. VAT	VAT
07.04.26	996	Clerk	Salary	£1,336.74	
07.04.26	997	HMRC	PAYE	£617.72	
07.04.26	998	Clerk	Mileage & reimbursement costs	£104.55	
07.04.26	999	KCC	Pension contribution	£754.56	
07.04.26	1000	Hever Landscapes Ltd	Tidy yew trees at Pump House	£90.00	£15.00
07.04.26	1001	SDC	Dog bin emptying Jan to Mar 2026	£625.56	£104.26
07.04.26	1002	Vision ICT Ltd	Hosted email accounts	£264.00	£44.00
07.04.26	1003	NALC	Training event 13.05.26 JK, BW, LK	£126.00	£21.00
07.04.26	1004	Jill Johnson	Plants for Powdermills planter	£35.02	
07.04.26	1005	Spacehive	Pledge grant for Kent Acre	£300.00	
				£4,254.15	£184.26

Signed

Date