

LEIGH PARISH

DRAFT MINUTES OF AN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD AT 7PM ON TUESDAY 15TH MAY 2018

1. **Apologies:** M Read

2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting.** Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 23rd May 2017 had been displayed on the Parish Noticeboard.

Proposed: Alan Bennett; Seconded David Vincent; Approved unanimously by the Meeting

3. **Introduction.** Cllr Scutt, Chairman of Leigh Parish Council, welcomed everyone to the parish's Annual Meeting.

4. **Chairman's Report.**

The purpose of the Annual Parish Meeting is so that the Parish Council can explain what it has been doing over the last year. It also enables the electors to have their say on anything they consider is important to the people of the Parish.

As always, the year had been very eventful and thanks must always go to those who give of their time so freely to undertake the role of Parish Councillor. This year Mark Read has joined the PC, and we do hope that his association with us will last a long time. Parish Councillors come to the role and have steep learning curves to familiarise themselves with the various tasks that we undertake and our position within West Dorset and communication within the village. Often Parish Councillors undertake roles within the PC that they have to report back on, involving other work outside of these meetings. Without all this going on in the background the PC would cease to function effectively.

All this is going to be more important as this coming year progresses as Dorset itself seeks to establish the Unitary Authorities. WDCC/DCC are looking to enhance the role and duties of Parishes with the devolvement of duties, and contracting of services. Indeed this Parish Council has already indicated that it does not wish to contract services that the PC would then need to pay for (this imposing increases to the Parish precept) for services that are currently paid for under the existing Council tax.

Residents of Leigh who would like to learn more about the role of Parish Councillor were encouraged to ask, as the PC is always happy to be able to consider people as future Councillors. Furthermore, in 2019, all seven available Parish Councillor seats will be up for election; residents of Leigh were encourage to stand.

Carinna Vickers, the Parish Clerk, has recently resigned. She was present to enable a transition to the new clerk, Beverley Harrison. The parish Clerk fulfils an invaluable role; the Chairman proposed a big thank you to Carinna Vickers for her valuable work over the past few years. This was supported by all present. The Chairman hoped that Beverley will enjoy her newly appointed position.

The Chairman also thanked the Parish's District and County Councillor, Mary Penfold. She has not only given much help to the PC, but also to many individual villagers, and has ably provided advice and action. In that busy role, the PC greatly appreciated the time devoted to Leigh and its residents.

With Jack Patterson leaving the village, an alternative host for the Leigh Village web site was needed. This has been taken up by another villager, Russel Jepson. The Chairman felt that the revamped site with its new look was great, and hoped that residents find it useful and informative. Residents were encouraged to make use of it and add it to their 'favourites'. Residents can still

add their village activity themselves and keep up with all that is going on in the village. The Parish Council is attempting to put information documents on to the web site to keep everyone informed about services that affect the village. Some may be consultation documents to which residents can respond as individuals. Some parishioners are not connected to the internet; so if you are, and you live next door to someone who isn't, residents were encouraged to try to let them know what is available.

Work had progressed all year with the installation of gates to replace some stiles. Trevor Evans has for many years undertaken the role of footpath officer. He has been a sterling advocate of our footpaths and has worked with the County Council to ensure that we keep up a good standard, even in the face of their diminishing resources. He is now handing the reigns to Rachael Graham. It's a good job she enjoys walking. On behalf of the village and PC, the Chairman formally recorded their appreciation of the work he has undertaken and still hope to see him around with his dog walking some of his familiar haunts. The Chairman thanked Rachael for volunteering, and hoped she would enjoy the role and all the fresh air.

The PC continues to have a contract with the County Council for some extra work in cutting verges on footpaths, extending it to cover the one inside the hedge leading to the car park here at the village hall.

The PC also passed its thanks to Andrew Denham, who volunteered to take on our Speedwatch, more on this later.

Councillor Bennett has been working with Environment Agency and others to develop a flood alleviation scheme, more to come on that also.

Another litter-pick was organised by Paul Orchard, and if residents had read their monthly WVM, will have noted the results of that. Many thanks to Paul for leading his band of volunteers to keep the village tidy – it's amazing how much builds up, not only by blowing in, but by those careless enough to drop their litter and not take it home.

Fiona and John Parks have handed the reigns of Moviola to Robert Cutler; the Chairman thanked them for their work in continuing to provide the films in the village that we all enjoy the village. Parishioners were encouraged to support this activity, because as they say – use it.

The issue of a potential Village Green had been the most consuming interest of the year in the village and certainly divided opinion. A formal village poll was consequently held to help clarify the numbers in the respective 'for' and 'against' camps. 117 voted for the concept; 57 against. This represented a turnout of just over 40% of the parish electorate. However, the agent has since stated that the owner is no longer interested in making a possible sale.

Graham Bugler has been the PC representative on the Play Park Committee. That committee continues to investigate the transferring of equipment and purchase of new equipment, ready for relocation to ground owned by the Village Hall. Many people are involved in this project; the Chairman thanked all concerned, but particularly Mel Shine and Julia Jepson.

Development of a Neighbourhood Plan has continued, at a slightly lower tempo, led by Richard Smith. The PC thanked him for his work in leading on this; however he is now stepping down as chair, but will continue to contribute towards its final conclusion.

The Chairman stated there is much ongoing work to take us forward and new projects will no doubt come to light. She stated that, as her fellow Councillors were aware, she had decided to step down as Chair of the PC after five years, so this was her last annual report. She was remaining as a Parish Councillor and hope to continue to contribute to the life of the village for many more years to come. She felt that there are many good works in this village, but as always it did require fresh blood and contributors to keep things going. No matter how much or little time

residents could give, every little helps. Individuals interested in any particular project were encouraged to offer to lend a hand.

The Chairman conclude by stating that if your name had not been mentioned, it is not because she had not valued your contribution, but to prevent her from talking all evening. So many had helped her over the years and given support that she would like just to say a big thank you.

5. Parish Council Finance.

In January 2018, Leigh PC had set a parish precept for FY 2018-19 that remained unchanged from the previous year (FY 2017-18). Thus a Band D property continued to pay an annual parish charge of £36.84.

The PC ended the recently past FY, 2017-18, with a positive balance of £13,569.03. There were no debts outstanding. £7,478.89 of the balance was committed towards the future cost of moving and revitalising the Playpark. This left an uncommitted reserve of £6,339.94 at the start of the current financial year. The budget set for FY 2018-19 has an expected deficit of £1,600 for the year; it was intended that it would be funded from the uncommitted reserve. Full details may be seen on the formal accounts.

Alan Bennett

15 May 1

6. Flood Alleviation Project.

Alan Bennett reported that Leigh PC continued to be engaged with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (South West) (FWAG(SW)) with the aim of progressing a flood alleviation scheme focused on the eastern edge of the village (Bridge Garage). The developing plan would involve the tightening of an existing natural choke point, located about one mile upstream of the Garage, immediately upstream of a point where Longbridge Drove crosses the stream. Mostly natural woodland materials would be used to tighten the choke point so that it would contain additional spate water in an existing natural flood area above that point. The reduced rate at which sudden spates of excess water could then flow down stream would accordingly reduce the occurrences of flooding at Bridge Garage. It would also ease the pressure on the Somerset Levels, FWAG(SW)'s primary interest.

Costings for this work would be available in due course. Whilst it was anticipated that FWAG(SW) would fund part of the scheme, there was likely to be a requirement for financial support from the Parish Council. There is, however, no budgeted funding for this scheme by Leigh PC in FY 2018 – 19.

Alan Bennett

15 May 2018

7. Litter in the Verges.

In February 2018 Paul Orchard organised an early spring “blitz” on the litter that had appeared over the last year in the parish’s verges. Fifteen families from the parish responded to his call. They collected some 4 plastic bags-worth of general litter, plus 3 green recycling boxes of bottles. A heartfelt thanks was given to all who had participated so willingly and generously.

As per last year, there appeared to be a ‘serial chucker’ of inexpensive whisky and Australian Shiraz empty bottles – last year it was ‘Andrew Pierce’ and this year it was ‘Lime Tree’. The trail comes into the village on the road from Sherborne and appears to end in Batcombe. Residents who might know who was responsible were encouraged to leave these minutes in front of them. Maybe the individual would show some community spirit and take their litter home.

8. Leigh Parish Lands Charity – “Candle Auction”

Gordon Morris, Chairman and Co-opted Trustee, reported on the Candle Auction for the previous year. The Auction for 2017 was held on 21st June. The successful bids were:

Beer Mill Mead by Malcom Wills for £150.00

Alton Mead by Sam Vincent for £160.00

The next auction was planned for 7-30pm on Wednesday 20th June 2018 at the Village Hall. It would be supported by food for sale and a cash bar.

Gordon Morris

April 2018

9. Leigh Community Speed Watch (LCSW).

Andy Denham reported on the first year of activity of LCSW. Training of Members took place in 2017 with the aid of Dorset Police. No checks were carried out until mid-April 2018 as the poor weather had been an obstacle and the teams could not operate within the guide lines until then. They have been operating since then. He commended the dedication of the volunteers who were able to commit to the process, even with last minute cancellations caused by the weather.

The process had resulted in very few drivers failing the speed criteria, no doubt largely due to the high visibility of the teams. However, Totnell Hill was still an issue for excess speed. The team had made use of Police equipment and were well supported by the Dorset Police. It was hoped that the LCSW would continue to function and make the roads in Leigh safer.

Andrew Denham

11 May 2018

10. Neighbourhood Plan

There had been little movement on the Neighbourhood Plan in the previous year. Cllr Scutt was about to take over chairmanship of the Neighbourhood Plan Group from Richard Smith.

11. Date of Next Parish Annual Meeting

Cllr Scutt noted that the next Parish Annual Meeting would be immediately before the May 2019 Parish Council Meeting, 21st May 2019.

The Parish Meeting was complete and closed at 7-25 pm.

Chairman, Leigh Parish Council.