

NOTES OF AN ANNUAL MEETING OF LEIGH PARISH HELD ON TUESDAY 21ST MAY 2019 IN LEIGH VILLAGE HALL

Present:

- LPC Chairman – Cllr Alan Bennett – chairing meeting
- Five residents, with a further 3 joining during the meeting
- Parish Clerk (to take notes)

1. Apologies were received from: Mel Shine and Mark Read
2. The Chairman welcomed those attending and he described the range of the Parish Annual General Meeting. He referred to the booklet available that included the agenda, previous minutes and current reports (included as annexes to these notes). Whilst the meeting was run alongside the routine Parish Council meeting it was defined as a separate meeting for the parishioners to receive reports, updates and to make input as the considered fit.
3. The draft Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 15 May 2018 had been published to the Village Website and were available as part of the meeting booklet. There were no amendments to the published draft minutes
Proposed: Sandra Scutt; Seconded: Graham Bugler
4. The Chairman referred to the published report of Leigh Parish Council on activity during the previous year – see attached Annex.
5. Reports were issued in advance of the AGM for the following Village groups:
 - Candle Auction – Next Auction on
 - Church – St Andrews
 - Neighbourhood Plan
 - Village Hall

All as annexed and in addition: Flood Alleviation; Footpaths were reported in Item 4.

Play Park. Graham Bugler updated in-meeting about the on-going, extensive Playpark activity: After many years of accommodation by Les & Connie Wallace the village's Play Park was relocated to its new site behind the Village Hall. It required a major spend to relocate and refurbish, whilst still requiring completion in the subsequent months. It constituted a wildflower meadow around the relocated playground equipment. The slide was to be added, whilst the old equipment had been sold on, when the ground settled. He thanked the Playpark Committee and Mr & Mrs Wallace as the previous play park hosts.

Village Green. The purchase was on-going, using a loan, but yet to be completed. A committee would be required.

6. **Items for consideration raised by parishioners.**

6.1. Footpath Signage. It was noted during preparation for the upcoming walk around the parishes, that a number of footpath signs were in poor condition and particularly bad around Hermitage and Hilfield. They were outside the parish but could be referred either to Dorset Council or Rachel as Leigh's footpaths expert, who had the contacts to pass on matters of concern.

6.2. Debris in and overgrowing of the river. It was commented that perhaps a work party might be required to occasionally clear the river banks when debris built up. An earlier heavy branch had been removed by the Council on report as it was always a subtle line between restricting the flow or potentially blocking it.

6.3. On a similar vein the verges were left to overgrow, unless visibility was compromised, in order to preserve wild life by limiting verge trimming.

6.4. Pop-Up Pub. It was intended that Leigh would host a pop-up pub on the last Friday of each month to provide an opportunity to get together. Allocation of any profit was yet to be defined, although initially it would be towards the Village Hall. The first occasion was to be Friday 31st May 2019 and there would be a competition for a name for the pub when in operation.

7. **AOB**. There was no further business for discussion and the meeting closed at 19:37.

8. **Date of next meeting**. The next Parish AGM was expected on Tuesday 19 April 2020 on current scheduling.

Distribution:

- Parish Council
- Village Website
- Reporting Agencies

ITEM 4 - Report by Leigh Parish Council

Introduction

Leigh Parish Council (LPC) continues to be an active, elected public body on behalf of the parish. All seven seats were up for formal election on 2 May 2019; six parishioners put their names forward as candidates and have been duly appointed¹. Anyone interested in joining the PC as a co-opted Councillor to fill the still vacant seventh seat should contact the PC's Clerk Beverley Harrison on leigh@dorset-aptc.gov.uk

Achievements over the past year. The significant achievements of the PC over the past year are:

Playpark. Verbal update from Cllr Graham Bugler in Item 5.

Boyles Trust. The Boyle's Educational Foundation's purpose is to help young people living in Yetminster, Leigh and Chetnole, "*... who are in need of financial assistance ...*". Grants are awarded to school leavers who need help to cover the costs of such things as text books or tools of a trade, and also, although to a lesser extent to local youth organisations, such as the Guides. In 2018, sixteen grants totalling £7210.00 were awarded; two recipients were from Leigh.

- Grant applications are usually made during the summer to enable decisions to be taken in time for the beginning of the academic year (keep your eyes on the Wriggle Valley Magazine and notice boards).
- LPC is very grateful to Chris Fox for now being the Boyles Trust trustee for Leigh. For more information about how and when to apply, please contact the Clerk to the Trustees, Judy Gallimore, judygallimore@btinternet.com.

Flood Alleviation. Construction of four moderate and two very minor choke points has been completed, about a mile upstream of Bridge Garage. It is hoped that this Phase 1 work will be enough to alleviate the flash flooding that has previously occurred roughly annually at Bridge Garage, Stores and Post Office. The cost to the Parish Council was £1,324.80 including VAT. It is now a case of waiting to assess the effect. Any further work required in the future (Phase 2) would be likely to incur significant additional cost.

Litter Pick. The PC is most grateful to Paul Orchard for his organizing an effective village litter pick once again, in January 2019. Regrettably, the village is still suffering from a major number of discarded wine and whisky bottles on the route leading from Sherborne towards Batcombe.

Community Speed Watch. Up until the middle of 2018, this had been in effect on numerous occasions. However, with Andrew Denham having moved away from the village, and nobody being prepared to act as leader of the group, it has now regrettably fallen into abeyance. If anyone is interested in leading its resurrection, please contact the Parish Clerk.

Purchase of land for a Village Green. At its March 2019 meeting, the PC voted unanimously to proceed with the purchase of a 99-year lease on the 4.03 acre field

¹ In order to avoid unnecessary cost, if the number of candidates registering to stand in a Parish election is equal to or less than the number of seats available, then no formal poll is held. Nevertheless, such candidates are thereby legally registered as having been elected.

adjacent to the Village Hall in order to create a Village Green for Leigh. The associated application to borrow the necessary funding (£40k) was approved, and the purchase will be completed imminently.

A favourable response to a 'pre-app' consultation regarding the necessary 'change of use' has been received. A formal planning application will now be made to convert about half of the field into a Village Green (the remainder will continue as agricultural land). It is hoped that the conversion work will be completed before Spring 2020. The Parish Council is considering forming a sub-committee of volunteers to help finalise the details and progress the transformation; if you are interested in joining this committee, please contact the Parish Clerk as detailed above.

Footpaths. Rachel Graham has very kindly assumed the role of 'Footpath champion', taking over from Trevor Evans, who selflessly served in this role for many years – and still kindly acts as 'consultant' when the need arises. The PC is extremely grateful to Rachel for taking on this vital role that benefits the entire parish.

Over this past year, 6 new gates have been installed, thus further expanding the accessibility of the local network to those less able to manage the more traditional styles. Three of these gates were paid for by DCC, with the PC funding the remainder.

Rachel is planning a working party for June to undertake some ongoing maintenance on our post popular footpaths. It is also intended to continue to replace styles with gates; if you have a specific suggestion for a particularly awkward style, or are willing to join the working party, please contact Rachel (or the Parish Clerk).

Parish Council Finances

The annual precept for the parish for FY 2019-20 was set at £8774. This converts to an annual charge for a Band D property of £37.58pa, a 2% increase on the previous year's figure.

On 1 April 2018, the PC had a total positive balance of £13,569. On 31 March 2019, the figure stood at £15,688. Within these figures, capital of c.£17,000 was expended on relocating and refurbishing the playpark – this was mostly achieved due to grants received and the Playpark Committee's fundraising efforts. Further details will be available from the parish accounts on the village website.

Beverley Harrison joined as the Parish Clerk in mid-May 2018. The position is remunerated at 4 hours per week. The PC is grateful to her for the additional hours she has put in on a voluntary basis. Associated expenses such as computer equipment, stationary etc are reimbursed to the Clerk.

Thank you

Councillors commit considerable time to the role, without any remuneration. Furthermore, despite their inevitably incurring some personal expense, once again no Councillor made any claim for expense recompense in the past FY. I am extremely grateful for their time and selfless commitment to the benefit of the parish.

After some 5 years Diana West has now stepped down from the PC; the Council is grateful for her service to Leigh during this period.

The PC receives very considerable support from many others in Leigh who are not formally on the Council. In particular, the PC would like to thank Russell Jepson for the village website; Rachel Graham for being our footpath champion; Paul Orchard for organising the litter pick; the Playpark Committee for their continued service; Chris Fox for becoming our Boyles Trust representative; Emma Harris for coordinating Leigh's input to the Wriggle Valley Magazine.

My apologies for anyone who I should have thanked but have missed. Please let me know so that I don't make the same mistake next year!

Alan Bennett
Chairman, Leigh Parish Council
21 May 2019

Item 5 - Reports from Independent Groups

Leigh Candle Auction. Leigh's annual candle auction is one of only a few that remain of this once common method of auctioning all manner of things via the burning of, "one inch of candle" (think Meade-Falkner's Moonfleet). The auction is believed to date from the early 17th century, and so is well-worth preserving, both as a local tradition, and for its historical value.

Successful bidders have the rights, from August until February, to two pieces of land: Alton Mead, located half-way along Leigh Lane; and Beer/Bere Mill Mead, a small wooded plot near Stake Ford on the Yetminster Road. It is important to note that the Trust (full name, Leigh Parish Lands Trust) does not own the land. Alton Mead is privately owned, whereas Beer Mill, a registered common and Site of Nature Conservation Interest, is effectively in the care of the parish council.

The money raised from the auctions is used, primarily, to help people in, "*... conditions of need, hardship or distress ...*". Sadly, in this age of foodbanks, this is still the Trust's main purpose. Any parishioner in need should, please, contact, in confidence, any of the Trustees for help. If circumstances allows we also support village organisations, such as the Brownies and the play park committee. We are not a wealthy charity (last year's auction raised a total of £455.00), but if we can help, we will.

The Trustees are: David Vincent, Sue Fudge, Michelle Read, Les Wallis, Dennis Fudge, Dan Goodfellow, and Gordon Morris.

The next auction will be held in the village hall at 7.30pm, 19th June. In the absence of "Chippy" and his fish and chip van, we will be offering, for a very modest price, fish(cakes) and chips. As usual Julian Turnbull's equally good value bar will be offering a range of bid-encouraging (!) drinks. Please do join us.

Gordon Morris
Chairman of Trustees

St Andrew's Church, Leigh. Our church was one of the first churches in the Salisbury Diocese to achieve a Bronze Award under the Church of England's Eco Church initiative. We continue to play an active and leading part in encouraging other churches to take greater care of the environment.

Our Open Weekend in June 2018 was one of the highlights of the village's year. More than 100 people joined us in the afternoon in Clipping the Church. This was the third consecutive year that we have revived this ancient custom in which people join hands round the outside of the church and symbolically embrace the church. It is fast becoming a village tradition.

Three generations of local farmers were interviewed in a "This Farming Life" session and local historian Luke Moulard gave a fascinating talk on the changing geography and demography of Leigh, illustrating his talk with copies of old maps. Luke returned in February to give an absorbing talk aimed at encouraging people to embark on their own local and family history projects.

This year's concerts featured a classical guitar duo, a recorder consort and the Stanchester Quire leading the singing for A Victorian Christmas.

We are keen for the church to be used by as many people as possible and in a variety of ways. Once again, we served cooked breakfasts and, under our Community Spirit Sundays initiative, lunches in the church. The first Tuesday of each month is now widely accepted as a chance for the village to get together for one of our monthly Coffee mornings.

Despite living in an apparently affluent village, there are occasions when villagers find themselves in sudden and pressing need, whether through financial need or because of lack of transport. To this end the church has an Emergency Box containing tins of food for use by people in need. It is a salutary thought that this facility is used on a fairly regular basis.

We are pleased to report that we continue to enjoy a good and supportive relationship with both the management and residents of the Old Vicarage.

Our church is not a wealthy one. In common with every church in the land we have the fabric inspected every five years. We have just received our latest Quinquennial Report and will be facing a host of expensive repairs over the next five years in order to fulfil our obligation to pass on to future generations a church that is healthy and fit for purpose. We continue to serve the community through our regular programme of weekly services and with other special services, including Christmas (our Carol Service attracted 90+ adults and 27 children), Easter, Remembrance (for which we alternate with Chetnole church), baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Church members are also actively involved in many village initiatives including the pensioners' monthly lunches and the relocation and refurbishment of the village Play Park.

Alaistair Cumming and Eddie Upton
Churchwardens

Neighbourhood Plan. The year had commenced with Richard Smith having resigned as Chair, although continuing an interest in Community Transport. As a result I took over as temporary chair to restart the gathering of a committee. One more meeting was held with a group. During the summer Jonathan Dixon, who had been recruited, agreed to take on the task of chair. Two further meetings were held, one with the consultant present, and some work identified. Another new recruit, Andrew Little also undertook some further work on housing, but it was difficult to get others to agree some tasks, which meant a heavy burden upon Jonathan. I agreed to undertake communication. A questionnaire was finalised and is about ready to go to the printers. However, an application for finance still has to be made.

Unfortunately, Jonathan now has a heavy work commitment and after careful consideration has resigned as chair. As a result, no further work has been undertaken.

I get the impression that residents of Leigh are somewhat apathetic about having a Neighbourhood Plan, as people are reluctant to both come forward and then undertake any meaningful work. Despite the advantages of our village having such a plan, without a chair to take this forward and a committee to undertake various tasks it cannot happen.

I now recommend that the Parish Council consider this position and decide on the next steps.

Sandra Scutt
Parish Council representative to the neighbourhood Plan

Leigh WI. Another busy 12 months for Leigh WI, who celebrated their 92nd birthday in March with a party and entertainment provided by Jan Millward, who had us in stitches with

her amusing and down to earth poetry. We have had many diverse subjects presented to us by interesting Speakers throughout the year.

We have an annual outing in June – last year to Wilton House in Wiltshire. We have two theatre trips a year and also run a very popular monthly lunch club, which takes us to many different venues throughout the County. Our Christmas meal was excellent and enjoyed by Members and visitors alike and our main fundraiser, our Jumble Sale in March, was again a great success. We have recently introduced a new Craft/Hobbies group which appears to be very popular.

Leigh WI has a healthy membership, but new members are always very welcome. We pride ourselves in being a “friendly bunch” and we greatly enjoy our monthly “get togethers”.

Starting in October this year we will be trying out a new format for our monthly meetings: October – March will take place in the afternoon and April – September in the evening.

Inga James
Secretary Leigh WI

Leigh Village Hall

Bookings and Events Village Hall bookings average over 45 per month. The Table Tennis group continued strongly, with its weekly sessions plus the occasional friendly match. Leigh Short Mat Bowls Club plays on Monday afternoons and has reinstated its session on the last Thursday of each month. The monthly Discussion Club and Leigh WI sessions have attracted interesting speakers and continue to be very popular. The weekly Gentle Yoga sessions, the exciting new Tai Chi sessions and the new Squats and Tots sessions are well attended. The Village Hall was booked privately by local residents on many occasions for children’s birthday parties, adults’ birthday parties, wedding anniversaries, wedding receptions and funeral teas.

Major events included: Flower and Produce show, the Leigh Food Fair and Classic Car Show and the Christmas Fair. There were well attended productions by the Junior and Senior Wriggle Valley Players.

Wriggle Valley Lunch Club. The Wriggle Valley Lunch Club at the Village Hall on the third Tuesday of the month continues to serve excellent meals to local residents over the age of sixty. Two courses plus coffee cost just £6 per head.

Moviola. Moviola film evenings have been successful in the enjoyment they have brought to local residents and financially for the Hall. However, it would be good to see more residents attending in the coming year.

Leigh Playpark has re-opened in the meadow to the south of Leigh Village Hall.

Web Sites:

- www.leighvillagehall.co.uk
- www.leighvillage.org.uk
- www.facebook.com/LeighVillageHallDorset