

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Leigh Parish Council Meeting held on-line on Tuesday 19th January 2021.

Logged in: Cllr A Bennett – Chairman; Cllrs Bugler, Dixon, Read (partial), Scutt and Ward. Parish Clerk.

Public: DCllr M Penfold; Mr J Dixon

Members of the public were invited to attend the virtual meeting as usual, on contacting the Parish Clerk for log-in details.

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Opening Remarks. The Chairman opened the meeting at 7-30pm

1. Apologies for Absence: Mr D Vincent

2. Declarations of Interest: Nil

3. LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

Minutes of the previous online Leigh Parish Council Meeting on 17th November 2020 were circulated and published post-meeting with no corrections request in-meeting.

3.1. Chairman to sign hard copy minutes as an accurate record.

3.2. Matters arising were covered in the subsequent agenda items.

4. APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS

A consolidated schedule of payments was reviewed by Councillors – incorporating:

4.1. The 10 December PWLB Loan Direct Debit Payment was the only payment made since previous meeting, impact of £1231.47 reflected on the spread sheet, Item 5.

4.2. Payments for agreement in-meeting added up to £1232-40. All were agreed for payment. Clerk to circulate cheques for signature.

4.3. There were no specific payments expected before the next meeting, although see Item 8 for Play Park project finance.

5. FINANCES OVERVIEW: Current Year

The Parish Accounts spreadsheet reconciled to 31st December 2020 had been circulated prior to the meeting.

5.1. The Chairman reported that with 3 months of the financial year remaining, he expected to be marginally underspent in year as compared with the budget. The unbudgeted work on signposts (fingerposts) was off-set by delayed fitting of footpath gates, due to pandemic restrictions. The anticipated cost of these gates had been carried forward into the construct of the F/Y 2021/22 budget.

6. PARISH BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2021/22

Leigh's parish precept application for FY 21/22 is due by 31 January 2021,

On 11 December 2020 Dorset County issued supporting paperwork, including the tax base for Leigh, which has reduced by 2.61% versus the 2020/21 level.

Based on this, the Chairman had circulated email of 15 December 'Draft budget v2', with associated options. The Chairman recommended that that the Band D parish

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charge be increased by 3% (to c.£39.48); this would produce a parish precept of £9002 (versus £8974 in 2020/21). If agreed, this would result in a potential deficit of -£800 for FY 21/22, as detailed in the draft budget.

6.1. Councillors queried the decrease of the tax base. It was noted that it was property dependent, refined by use and occupancy.

Chairman's post meeting note: very many other parishes had similarly suffered a reduction in their 2021/22 tax base, so perhaps this was caused by a review by DC of how the base is arrived at.

6.2. The v2 draft budget was accepted, and it was agreed that the parish would accordingly submit a precept request for £9002 for 2021/22.

Proposed by Cllr Scutt; Seconded by Cllr Bugler. Agreed unanimously.

6.3. Parish Clerk to action. (Note of Action: Submitted 20th and receipted by Precepts on 21 January 2021)

PLAYPARK UPDATE

8.1. The Play Park remained open within the current regulations.

8.2. **New slide project.** Ground works had been started. The mound was prepared and being fenced off to permit a chance for everything to settle before equipment could be fitted. Meanwhile, other playpark equipment could still be used.

8.2.1. As agreed at the previous meeting, it was asked that the Play Park Committee now transfer £1000 from their 'to hand' funds, ready to support the next payment installment. Cllr Bugler took for action.

9. VILLAGE GREEN UPDATE

Cllr Ward updated on additions to the Village Green:

9.1. **Tree planting.** Rob Cutler was progressing phase 1 of tree planting on the Village Green. Helpers were needed although this would be subject to pandemic restrictions. Some tree donations have been were offered. It was also noted that the Village Hall Committee was planning to plant 2000 trees around the village, including some allocated to the Village Green. The only issue was timing of planting versus availability of stock (including bare rooted or more mature).

9.1.1. Nurturing of trees existing in the hedge line was also discussed. Cllr Read advised that it was appropriate to initially mark those that should be retained to permit them to grow up; this was already being done in other hedges.

9.2. **Benches.** Cllr Ward had investigated benches and the price range per bench pending definition of a budget. Many were either unsuitable, expensive or both. The most suitable was thought to be a sustainable wood bench that could be fixed, so to avoid theft. Acquisition would be phased and donations were also considered likely. Bench locations would need to take account of access for grass and hedge cutting, so Cllr Ward undertook to draft proposed locations, initially for no more than 4.

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7. GRANT APPLICATION(S) (Item relocated from earlier in the agenda)

The Chairman referred to the continued need for funds to support projects. Grants were available but it would require a Councillor to take the lead in searching these out and applying for them. Cllr Scutt kindly volunteered; however, details of exactly what was to be the product of any grant application (eg agreed style, number and cost of benches or whatever) would be needed before an associated application could be submitted.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE.

10.1. Cllr Dixon reported that two meetings of the Dorset Climate Action Group had taken place and two meetings of the Leigh group had taken place on-line since the last parish council meeting. Attendance at the Dorset-wide group had grown with 42 people from town and parish councils attending the recent on-line meeting. Parish council representation had grown, and they were interested in similar themes to those being investigated in Leigh.

10.2. The village group, currently 8 members, is open to anyone interested in looking at how the village can implement the Dorset Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy at the ground level in Leigh.

10.3. Under the Dorset Strategy's Transport theme, one ambition is to promote cycling and walking, both in their own right and also as an alternative to car use. The village group would like to support this as there are already a number of cyclists in the village. It was suggested the parish council could provide bike racks at key destinations, subject to permission of the landowners. Cllr Dixon had identified the Sheffield Cycle Stand Eco as a cost-effective option. Each stand allows two cycles to park and be locked.

10.4. It was agreed to go ahead, to gain permission and if given, to buy the cycle stands. A budget of £250 was allocated and further funding from other organisations will be sought.

10.4.1. It was proposed that up to £250 be allocated to the project.

Proposer Cllr Ward; Seconded Cllr Bugler - Agreed

10.5. Cllr Dixon raised the issue of road safety in order to facilitate cycling and walking, particularly at sections where the road narrows on blind corners. This will be taken up with the Dorset Highways team, although it was noted that site visits were not being arranged during the lock down conditions.

10.6. Cllr Dixon agreed to circulate the Leigh group's Action Plan, subject to agreement with the group members.

11. PLANNING

11.1. **To consider Planning Matters.** The Parish Clerk reported the following updates since previous meeting:

- **WD/D/20/002109** KEEPERS COTTAGE, BATCOMBE ROAD, LEIGH, SHERBORNE, DT9 6JA. Two and one storey extension. Approved with effect 18 December 2020.
- **WD/D/20/000941:** Lower Totnell Farm DT9 6HT, changes to old dairy building to increase accommodation. Approved subject to conditions with effect 27

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November 2020.

- **WD/D/20/000942:** Lower Totnell Farm DT9 6HT, listed building consent provided for works above (941) with effect 29 November 2020.
- **WD/D/20/002250:** Guyers, DT9 6HL. Heat pump installation and enabling works. Approval 14 January 2021
- **WD/D/20/002251:** Guyers, DT9 6HL. Listed building consent for works as above, approved 14 January 2021

There were no parish planning consultations outstanding for parish input.

11.2. **Dorset Council Local Plan.** Dorset Council had released its draft Local Plan for review on 18th January 2021 which provided minimal time for review before the council meeting as the input deadline was 15 March 2021 – so before the next meeting. Two councillors had already managed to read some of it. There was concern that even for a small village details could be lost and that more time was needed for full consideration. A series of surgeries and webinars were scheduled in support of the consultation.

11.2.1. Particular attention was drawn to Chapter 2, and Appendix 2. Whereas it appeared at first sight that the villages such as Leigh, in Tier 4, were not destined for expansion during the 15-year duration of the Plan, Leigh had nevertheless been earmarked for a quota of an increase of 19 new properties.

11.2.2. It was agreed that the Chairman would seek an extension to the consultation period. In the meantime, he would work up a proposed line to take.

11.2.3. The link <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/dorset-council-local-plan.aspx> has also since been shared on local social media to invite comment.

12. HIGHWAYS

12.1. **Gritting.** There was correspondence with Highways about the need for gritting on the main route through Leigh, following a period of icing when the temperature did not increase above freezing for 2+ days around 31 Dec 20 causing treacherous conditions. Conditions had caused a lorry to slide off at the bottom of Totnell Hill, causing damage to the Wessex Water site fence. There were at least two other incidents. The Chairman had written to DC regarding the lack of gritting through the village.

A reply had explained that there was a partial route (the Blue route) for gritting in Leigh applicable during '*prolonged temperatures below freezing*' – however this ceased at Totnell Corner, leaving the ongoing route to Longburton untreated. None on the PC had seen any evidence that even the partial route through Leigh had been treated this time.

The Chairman undertook to write again to ask about the absence of application on the "blue route" identified, and to request an extension to it.

12.2. **Speed limits.** The Chairman referred to correspondence that he had received about a proposed extension of the existing 40mph speed limit at Totnell, so that it included Three Gates. Cllr Bugler noted that there had been

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a similar request to Highways some years previously. Ideally a further approach would refer to the correspondence from that earlier exchange (Parish Clerk to seek) to identify what might have changed. The PC was wholeheartedly supportive of this new initiative.

12.3. Finger Post Project, including insurance. The Chairman reported that there had been offers to fund elements of the finger post restoration. The Totnell Corner post's cost had now been funded by the immediate residents – all that remained to be done on this post now was the inclusion of its top roundel. Other offers for funding had also been received for other posts. A request to replace the stolen Calfhay Cross roundel was also being followed up by the project team – an offer for funding of this had also been received.

The Parish Council recorded its thanks to all involved, both in the restoration work and to the generosity of so many residents.

12.3.1. Insurance. The Chairman asked whether each post should be insured, should a finger post in future need to be replaced commercially following damage or theft. Dorset Council could replace the supporting post, as for any other signage. It was considered that c.£1000 was a realistic cost per post, if nothing was recovered and voluntary effort in future was not available – the Chairman undertook to verify this figure with DC. The Parish Clerk had raised the matter with the insurers, since the posts would be added to the asset register. (NB: since responded that uplift of the premium would be £15 PA based on £3000 value of all of the posts.)

13. **LONGBRIDGE DROVE.**

13.1. Background and Damage. Major additional damage had recently been inflicted on Longbridge Drove by off-road driving. The culprits in the most recent incident in November had been identified from their number plate and “ticketed” by the Police.

13.2. Way ahead. Whilst Longbridge Drove was classed as a By-way Open to All Traffic (BOAT), previous damage meant that it remained closed pending repairs. The drove surface was in a poor state even for walkers, and complaints had been submitted to the County Councillor as well as the Parish Council. Methods of protecting the drove from damage by motor vehicles were being investigated by Dorset Council – they are concerned that any repairs will soon be destroyed by off-road traffic and had yet to identify a solution.

14. **COVID -19** – item to update and or any Parish matters not included in other items. Full lockdown applied with effect 5 January 2021 and items were being uploaded to the local media as appropriate. See Item 16.

15. **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED.**

15.1. Wriggle Valley Magazine had reported by letter that it expected a shortfall of funds in the next financial year and was requesting donations from councils. Clerk to re-circulate the letter so that matter might be considered in the next meeting; it was felt that the WVM was a most worthwhile enterprise.

15.2. DAPTC had emailed parish councils about its new constitution (from the AGM); asking that representatives were nominated to expand input and completion of a

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survey due as at 22 January The Parish Clerk undertook to complete the survey on behalf of the council.

16. **ITEMS OF AN URGENT NATURE – SUBJECT TO CHAIRMAN’S APPROVAL. Nil**

DCllr Penfold was asked by the Chairman if she had any Dorset County input:

- She reminded the PC of her regular meetings with the West Dorset MP. These were now increased to fortnightly and remained a forum for local input.
- Council and committees were still meeting and conducting business on-line.
- Staff were still working in most cases on-line and from home, but not making routine site visits during the National lockdown.

17. **DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETINGS:**

The next scheduled LPC meeting at 7-30pm on Tuesday 16th March 2021.

Arrangements to be agreed closer to the date.

17.1. Meetings are agreed as 3rd Tuesday in alternate (odd) months, and subsequent meeting dates in 2021 would be: 18 May, 20 July, 21 September and 16 November 2021

17.2. 18 May 2021 is the Parish Council AGM at 19:30 preceded by the Parish AGM at 19:00 / 7-00pm. (Not held in 2020)

The meeting was closed at 9-12pm