

NOTES OF AN ANNUAL MEETING OF LEIGH PARISH RESIDENTS ON TUESDAY 18TH MAY 2021

Present: Fourteen residents, increasing to 18 after meeting start; including Alan Bennett as meeting chairman. Plus: Mary Penfold – Dorset Councillor; Parish Clerk for notes.

1. **Apologies.** Apologies were received from: Hilary Cummings

2. **Introduction and Meeting Preamble.** The Parish Council Chairman, Alan Bennett, opened the meeting at 7pm by welcoming the residents present. The last such Parish AGM had been 2-years previously, on Tuesday 21st May 2019, as the parish had been in lockdown a year before. As matters stood the AGM was on the first available date when meetings were permitted. The meeting was differentiated from the Parish Council Meetings as it permitted discussion about matters of concern to parish residents, so that the Chairman was the facilitator.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING.

The previous Parish AGM minutes were available previously and circulated again as part of the Agenda and meeting paperwork. It had not been possible to have an AGM in 2020. It was agreed that the minutes represented an accurate record of the AGM on 21 May 2019.

Proposer: Sandra Scutt; Seconder: Graham Bugler Agreed

4. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT.

The Chairman referred to his report that had been circulated with the agenda and that is attached with these minutes. He drew particular attention to:

4.1. **Leigh Lifeline.** He thanked Julia Jepson and her team for their hard work particularly assisting adjustment to the restrictions of the pandemic lockdown. It was noted that the team was wound up recently whilst there were no requests for assistance.

4.2. **Parish Council Vacancies.** Leigh Parish Council consisted of seven councillors and there were two recent resignations of councillors resulting in notification of casual vacancies [Casual vacancies - Dorset Council](#) to permit parishioners to request an election in either case if required. As no elections were requested a co-option was on-going for one at the following parish council meeting and there remained a vacancy for which volunteers were welcomed.

4.2.1. Applications should be to the Parish Clerk email: leigh@dorset-aptc.gov.uk
Eligibility remained the same as for any councillor to be nominated ie: adults already resident in the parish of Leigh for 12 months or more. Parish Councillors are not paid, although expenses are paid as appropriate to assure wider involvement of all residents.

5. The following matters for discussion were pre-notified on the Agenda:

5.1. **An improvement plan for road markings in the village – Village Consultation (- Improving Village road safety).** Cate Dixon reported on a plan to help improve road safety particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, the Dorset Highways Team agreed to refresh the road markings (white side markings and SLOW marking) to alert drivers and reduce speed, and the parish was advised to carry out a consultation to confirm the need, which was ideally achieved in the Parish AGM Initially discussions had focussed on the narrow section of road between Leigh Cote and Church Cottage and the narrow bend between Back Drove and the New Coach House. Subsequent discussion included the road at the Cross and further down approaching The Old Stores. Views had been sought, in advance of the meeting, from village residents through the Wriggle Valley News, informal discussion

and then open debate during the Village Annual Meeting. No objections to the proposed road markings were raised. A sketch of the planned road markings was requested, and the photos provided by Dorset Highways follow below that show the locations.



Chetnole Road markings



Road past the Garage and Village Stores

5.2. Gritting service by Dorset Council and Village Snow Plan. Referring to his report the Chairman noted that the village roads were dangerously iced for a number of days over the New Year bank holiday and that the current gritting routes were considered inadequate following number of accidents over this period. It was clarified that such accidents can only be acted upon if reported to the Police and record made of the event. (Wessex Water had previously confirmed that they had not reported impact damage to the pumping station fence in January).

5.3. Community Speed Watch (CSW)– resurrection of previous initiative (Alan Bennett / Sarah Rudd) The previous manager of Leigh's Speed Watch stood down in 2018 and the scheme lapsed, when another leader did not volunteer. All equipment was subsequently returned. Revival of the Speed Watch initiative was suggested in the Wriggle Valley Magazine, following recent observations about speeding and

before the meeting parishioners had volunteered in response and a list for further volunteers was available in the meeting. Sarah Rudd had volunteered to take the lead on a Community Speed Watch group for Leigh.

5.3.1. Volunteers would be briefed by the Police and different positions would be agreed and assessed for health & safety as well as need.

5.4. Further Observations. As a matter of record, additional to the road issues covered above at 5.1, 5.2 & 5.3 above many of those attending noted the poor to dangerous state of the roads through Leigh, all of which had deep potholes. Some were sufficient to be pedestrian trip hazards or sufficient to endanger push bikes and motorcycles. Whilst many had been marked for maintenance the paint had since worn off before the work was started. It was the opinion of many attending the meeting that the village was ignored for highways work, despite increased traffic.

5.5. Overgrowing hedges alongside roads. Please see [Hedgerows and high hedges - Dorset Council](#) for current regulations, particularly that council input was limited. Graham Bugler noted that there were village properties where vegetation was overhanging, and the landowner was responsible for its maintenance to keep roads and footpaths clear of vegetation for users.

5.6. Leigh's Response to Dorset Council's 'Local Plan' - impact on Leigh. Sandra Scutt referred to the Dorset Local Plan that placed Leigh in Tier 3 / 4. There were 19 properties suggested for addition over the term of the Dorset Plan (8.3% growth) and 6 houses were added in the previous 5 years, which added income from precept and Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL). The village had not completed a neighbourhood plan, although work had started on one it had stalled. With significant mismatches between local plans and strategies, including commencement of consultation about a National Park in part of Dorset as soon as responses were required for the Dorset Local Plan, it was wondered where a Village Plan would fit?

5.6.1. It was observed that not all new housing was bad as it should come with supporting facilities and where appropriate a Community Infrastructure Levy was charged on certain new builds, which made funds available to the Parish.

5.6.2. During early Neighbourhood Plan investigations, a number of local landowners had been directly approached by Dorset Council, about land that might be released for development.

5.6.3. Parish response, to the local MP, about a later National Park consultation had been negative due to the by then mixed messages, and impact of potentially reallocated property builds following establishment of such a park.

6. **Local Clubs and Activities**. Groups were asked for reports to leigh@dorset-aptc.gov.uk, for inclusion in these minutes. The only such report received is as below:

Leigh Candle Auctions, 2020/21 Somewhat to our surprise the auction took place in much the usual way on 22 July 2020. Although, it was a month later than normal, and with participants and observers suitably socially distanced. The auctions were as exciting as ever! One candle burned for nineteen minutes before (finally!) dying; the other for ... hardly any time at all. The two bids totalled £350.00, and are, as ever, available to help any villager in need. This year's auction will be held in the village hall on 23 June 2021 (7.30 for 8.00pm).

Gordon Morris - Chairman, Leigh Parish lands Trust

Any other groups should still send any reports that might have been missed for inclusion for the record. It was also asked that local clubs and activities should notify the Parish Clerk of their best contact point to ensure greatest engagement with local groups and activities.

7. **Any further items for consideration, raised by parishioners.** There were no further items raised following previous lively discussion in the earlier items.

8. **Date of next meeting.** The next Parish Annual General Meeting was expected to be before the routine (separate) Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 17th May 2022 at 7pm in the Village Hall.

Distribution:

- Parish Website
- On request.

ITEM 4. Report by Chairman of Leigh Parish Council / Councillors on Parish Council activity since the previous Parish AGM (2019)

Since the last village 'Annual Meeting' two years ago in May 2019, Leigh parish council has:

- Supported the 'Leigh Lifeline', conceived and led by Julia Jepson with the aid of numerous volunteers who have, over the past year's restrictions, ensured that anyone around the parish needing assistance with shopping, prescription collection and the like has been supported with an immediate response.
 - Leigh PC joins with the whole village in thanking Julia and her supporting team for this outstanding community effort.
 - As demand has now reduced to zero, the service was ended this March. We sincerely hope that it will not be needed again!
- Completed the purchase of a 99 year lease on the 4 acre field adjacent to the Village Hall, and established a Village Green of 2 acres. A fence has been installed on its southern boundary, separating the Green from the remaining 2 acres that is let as farmland.
 - The purchase was achieved by means of a 20 year Government loan of £40k, at a fixed annual interest of 2.3%. No increase to the parish precept was required to fund this or the loan's scheduled repayment.
 - 64 mixed trees have now been planted around the perimeter of the Green, and plans are in place to similarly establish some 6 occasional benches. Most of the cost of these additions has been funded by kind donations from our residents.
- The Play Park has been refurbished on its new site, on land kindly leased by the Village Hall (rent: £1 per annum for 50 years).
 - As well as the refurbished and expanded play equipment suitable for younger children, two picnic benches have been kindly donated.
 - A new mound complete with fort and slide has very recently been added to the attractions.
- Commenced the refurbishment of the parish's 'Fingerposts'. Many residents have been most generous in donating to this cause, enabling Graham Fudge and his supporting volunteer team to continue to progress the programme.
- Established a 'Climate Change' focus group, to identify what can be achieved locally.

- Responded to Dorset Council's draft 'Local Plan'. In this draft, at least 19 new properties would be required to be built in the parish over the next 17 years.
 - Bearing in mind Leigh was designated in the draft plan as a 'Tier 4 smaller village' (which 'would not be the focus for growth'), Leigh PC has questioned both the methodology employed and the scale of the proposed expansion.
- Engaged with Dorset Council Highways department regarding the need for:
 - an extension to the existing Totnell 40mph limit to include Three Gates.
 - the repainting and where appropriate expansion of the existing painted road markings (eg: 'Slow').
 - a more proactive and expanded Gritting and Salting service during icy weather.

The above – and many other smaller undertakings – have been achieved through a combination of the generosity of so many in the village, giving with both their time and pocket; the determination of those who act as designated 'champions' on behalf of the parish council, providing much of the momentum of many of the above initiatives; and the ongoing dedication of our elected parish councillors. I am hugely grateful for all that you have done, and continue to do, for Leigh.

Leigh PC constitutes of up to 7 councillors. There is currently a single vacancy. If you are prepared to allocate time and effort *pro-bono* in order to serve our community as a councillor, please contact Beverley Harrison, the Parish Clerk (leigh@dorset-aptc.gov.uk).

Alan Bennett
Chairman, Leigh parish council

May 2021