

PARISH COUNCILS and COUNCILLORS

WHAT

Parish Councils were established by act of Parliament in 1894 The Parish council is the first level of elected government and the only unpaid level.

It has a wide range of powers and responsibilities governed by law, including: Allotments. Bus Shelters. Drainage — of ditches and ponds. Footpaths. General Spending— parish councils can spend a limited amount of money on anything they deem of benefit to the community. Highways — right to enter into discussions about new roads and road widening. Consent of parish council required for diversion or discontinuation of highways. Traffic signs and other notices. Tree planting and verge maintenance. Legal proceedings - power to take part in any public enquiry, Litter - provision of litter bins and support for anti-litter campaigns. Planning— parish councils may be notified of any planning applications for the area. Public conveniences — provision and maintenance of public toilets. Recreation — provision of recreation grounds, public walkways, pleasure grounds, open spaces, village greens, gymnasiums, playing fields, holiday camps and boating ponds. Rights of Way — footpath and bridleway maintenance. Seats (public). Signs — danger signs, place names and bus stop signs. Traffic Calming. War Memorials. Water Supply — power to utilise stream, well or spring water and to provide facilities for general use. Responsibilities are increasing with the devolution of services from the District Council including paying for the running of local elections.

WHY

Parish Councils give local people a voice in local government.

Parish Councils have powers to undertake a variety of functions on behalf of their communities and to provide a wide range of local services which are important to their communities and enhance the quality of living.

WHO

The council members are seven parishioners elected by the community. Any parishioner aged over 18 may stand for election. Elections will take place in May if there are more than seven candidates. Otherwise, those existing councillors who stand will remain in office. If their number falls below seven, they can co-opt further councillors. The minimum requirement (the “Quorum”) is five.

WHERE AND WHEN

The council meets six times a year in the village hall and there is an annual meeting. Dates are published on the Village website (www.leighvillage.org.uk) and on notice boards. Any parishioner may attend meetings and may speak when invited to do so. The councillors are in frequent communication by email and telephone as matters arise.

HOW

The number of Councillors on the Parish Council is up to 7. A Chairman must be elected by the Parish Councillors and a Parish Clerk must be appointed. The Parish Clerk is also the Responsible Financial Officer of the Parish Council.

Funding

Parish Councils are funded by a "precept", a levy forming a tiny part of the Council Tax charged by County Councils.

Leigh is a very small Parish and therefore has a very small amount of income from the precept. This in turn limits what and how much it can do.

Parish Councils are not charities and therefore prohibited from raising funds other than from the precept. They are however, permitted to apply for grants, when and where applicable. They can also appoint a committee to run a lottery and to distribute any profits to charitable organisations within the Parish.

Transparency

Members of the public are entitled to attend any meeting of the Council.

All agendas and minutes of meetings are posted on the village notice board and on the village web site (www.leighvillage.org.uk).

All financial statements are summarised within the minutes of meetings.