

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>MINUTES</u></b>  <b><u>LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING</u></b>  <b><u>TUESDAY 13 MAY 2025 AT 1900</u></b></p>
	<p><b><u>Present – Councillors</u></b>  Steve Humphries (SH) – Chairman  Sam Vincent (SV)  Alfie Southwell (AS)</p> <p><b><u>Officials</u></b>  Kaye Elston (KE) – Clerk  Chris Kippax – Dorset Councillor</p> <p>Members of the public: 6</p>
1	<p><b><u>OPENING REMARKS by CHAIRMAN</u></b>  The chairman thanked everyone for attending and welcomed the audience to the meeting.</p>
2	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES for ABSENCE</u></b>  Mark Read, Alan Bennett and Julie Taylor – these were accepted.</p>
3	<p><b><u>LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</u></b>  Minutes of 19 March 2025 Leigh Parish Council meeting were formally approved and signed by the Chair.  Actions from the last meeting are covered on the agenda</p>
4	<p><b><u>COUNCILLOR CHRISTOPHER KIPPAX</u></b>  Councillor Kippax provided the following updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devolution – DCCare still waiting a response from central government in terms of why their bid to work more closely with neighbouring counties was refused. The next opportunity to bid will be in 2027.</li> <li>• Frustration from residents in relation to the higher level of council tax they are required to pay – It is one of the highest rates in the country. Councillor Kippax requested a written response from Dorset Council and received the following:  <i>The inequality in Council tax for Dorset residents is a topic which Councillors and MP's (of all Political parties) have for many years lobbied on. Dorset residents get a raw deal when it comes to how much funding is provided from Central Government (of all Political parties) with repeated calls for fairer funding as part of wider reform for Local Government funding.</i>  <b><i>When considering why Dorset Councils tax has had to increase year on year there are two key aspects:</i></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><i>Under funding of rural areas like Dorset, in favour of urban areas, in particular London</i></b></li> <li>2. <b><i>Local demographics resulting in increased demand for statutory services</i></b>  <b><u>Under funding</u></b>  <i>Analysis of the 23/24 budget identified that rural areas receive £111 less per head as part of the settlement analysis, meaning the majority of this shortfall ends up having to come from local tax.</i>  <b><u>Revenue Support Grant (RSG)</u></b>  <i>Since forming in 2019 up to the end of 2023/24 Dorset Council received a cumulative Revenue Support grant of £3.1m. For 2025/26 Dorset received £1.7m of this.</i></li> </ol> </li> </ul>

**Councils in London received significantly more. e.g. Newham £46.3m Southwark £45.8m, Hackney £44.5m, Tower Hamlets £42.7m, Lambeth £40.5m, Westminster £37.9m and so the list goes on.**

*Previously the Rural Services Delivery Grant, for which Dorset received £3.2m was meant to reflect the pressures on rural service delivery. For 2025/26 this has been abolished so Dorset receives no direct grant to support with the acute rural pressures.*

### **Demographic**

**The Council budget for 25/26 is net £417m of which £254m (60%) is spent on the Children's and Adult & Housing directorates, most of which are spent on meeting statutory need to some of our most vulnerable people and households. A third of the population in Dorset are over the age of 65 compared to an England average of 19%. This level of need coupled with almost no general funding (revenue support grant) puts huge pressure on the Councils budget each year and limits options to meet the legal requirement to set a balanced budget to serve our communities."**

- Planning applications – Councillor Kippax thanked Leigh councillors for paying attention to planning applications and advising him of their decisions.
- Housing Needs Assessment – If the parish council is interested in having one completed please let Councillor Kippax know as there is potentially some funding available.
- DAPTC – newsletter provides details of grants that are available. Clerk has circulated the details.
- Dorset Council and housing families – the local authority is trying to reduce the number of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation into a more stable environment.
- Ofsted inspection of Children Services in Dorset – the overall rating for this service in Dorset at the recent inspection was rated overall as outstanding.

**5**

## **FINANCES OVERVIEW**

### **5.1 Reconciliation of bank account (shared file)**

Council approved the Bank Reconciliation:

**£27,415.23 (as at 01.05.2025)**

### **5.2. Sums allocated to various Sub Accounts**

On 01.05.2025 the sums allocated to the sub-accounts stood at

Play Park (£8230.01 on behalf of The Play Park Committee)	£9,145.08
Village Green	£347.78
Community Infrastructure Funds	-
Repair and Replace Fund	£5389.66
National Lottery Environment Talks Fund	-
<b>FUNDS SUMMARY TOTAL</b>	<b>£14,882.52</b>
 Non-ring fenced funds	 <b>£12,532.71</b>

### **5.3 Proposed new financial spreadsheet**

Figures for 2024-25 have been added to the new spreadsheet.

	<p><b><u>5.4 Increases in grass cutting costs</u></b>  Clerk has been notified of an increase in the cost per cut for 2025-26 from £113.75 to £118. Councillors were in agreement to pay the additional cost per cut and had already been adjusted in the forecast budget. Councillors also in agreement to pay the monthly invoice for grass when it is presented up to a limit of £250 per month with one payment of £300 per year (to cover the additional cost of rolling the village green)  <b><i>Proposed: Councillor Humphries</i></b>  <b><i>Seconded: Councillor Southwell</i></b>  <b><i>All councillors present in agreement</i></b></p> <p>Councillors were in agreement for the transfer of £2000 into the village green sub-account for the year.</p> <p><b><u>5.5 Pension Regulator re-enrollment and re-declaration</u></b>  Clerk to complete by October 2025. Clerk does not require Leigh Parish Council to set up a pension scheme.</p> <p><b><u>5.6 VAT Re-claim 2024-25</u></b>  Clerk to complete and submit.</p> <p><b><u>5.7 Dorset Council bin collection</u></b>  Invoice has been received in the sum of £322.92 and advised the amount would be collected by direct debit. Clerk confirmed that Dorset Council collected £165.36 by direct debit and has emailed the finance department to follow up. Dorset Council have confirmed they did not take the full amount as Leigh Parish Council have a credit against their account with Dorset Council. Clerk will invoice Village Hall for half of the amount taken in the sum of £82.68.</p> <p><b><u>5.8 PWLB Loan Statement</u></b>  Clerk confirmed that the loan statement up to 31.03.2025 had been received and shows the balance remaining is £30 179.46.</p>
6	<p><b><u>INVOICES RECEIVED – PRE-APPROVED TO PAY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>6.1 The following invoices were presented:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dorset Council (19.03.2025) Election admin fee £50</li> <li>• HMRC (28.03.2025) PAYE £89.20</li> <li>• Kaye Elston (28.03.2025) Clerk salary £134</li> <li>• S Brockway standing order (28.04.2024) Payroll fee £20</li> <li>• TA Holder (11.04.2025) Grass cutting £286</li> <li>• Dorset Council (22.04.2025) refuse collection £165.36 (see above reference)</li> <li>• Lloyds Bank (22.04.2025) Service charge £4.25</li> <li>• S Brockway (28.04.2025) End of year fee £20</li> <li>• S Brockway SO (28.04.2025) Payroll fee £20</li> <li>• HMRC (30.04.2025) PAYE £117.20</li> <li>• Kaye Elston (30.04.2025) Clerk salary £175.80</li> <li>• TA Holder (01.04.2025) Grass cutting £236</li> </ul> <p><b><u>6.2 Forthcoming payments for advanced approval</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Playpark inspection fee (RoSPA) - £150.</li> <li>• Zurich Municipal Insurance renewal on 01.06.2025 - £644.73.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invoice for half of the cost of Remembrance silhouettes - £175.</li> <li>• Invoice for Barker-Fox Associates - £125.</li> <li>• PWLB Loan repayment - £1231.47</li> </ul> <p>These payments were approved:</p> <p><b><i>Proposed: Councillor Southwell</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Seconded: Councillor Vincent</i></b></p> <p><b><i>All councillors present in agreement</i></b></p> <p>6.3 <u>Payments/Income received</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precept from Dorset Council – first half of the year in the sum of £5531 (24.04.2025).</li> <li>• VAT reclaim for the financial year 2023-24 in the sum of £1669 (31.03.2025). The majority of this reclaim was the expenditure of CIL money for play equipment. Agreement to transfer this money into budget line for repairs (R&amp;R), to prepare for any repairs in the future for the equipment.</li> </ul>
7	<p><b><u>INTERNAL AUDIT AND CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION</u></b></p> <p><u>Internal audit report</u></p> <p>Clerk advised that the previous audit findings for 2023-24 have now been completed and do not appear on the 2024-25 audit. The internal audit report has been circulated to councillors. The main findings are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £8230.01 being held for the Play Park Committee needs to be removed from the income for the parish council on the external audit return (AGAR). This has been completed.</li> <li>• Financial Regulations need to be reviewed and adopted.</li> <li>• CIL Report is produced – currently a tab on the spreadsheet</li> </ul> <p><u>Certificate of Exemption</u></p> <p>This has been completed by the internal auditor and will be submitted to the external auditor for 2024-25.</p> <p><u>Notice of Public Rights for Noticeboard and website</u></p> <p>Clerk confirmed that the notice has been prepared and the dates available for the public to request sight of the accounts will be 03 June 2025 to 14 July 2025.</p>
8	<p><b><u>BUDGET MONITORING 2025-26</u></b></p> <p>The new spreadsheet will now be used for monitoring the parish council income and expenditure accounts.</p>
9	<p><b><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>P/FUL/2025/00335 The Old Post Lodge, Chetnole Road, Leigh, Dorset DT9 6HL</b> – Continue use of the annex as a dwelling (use class C3). Previously on March agenda as VOC application. <b>No objections.</b></li> </ul>
10	<p><b><u>DOCUMENTS/POLICIES TO BE UPDATE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Regulations 2024 – currently being drafted.</li> <li>• Code of Conduct – draft has been circulated which is based on the DAPTC recommended model. Councillors agreed to adopt them.</li> </ul>

	<p><b><i>Proposed: Councillor Southwell</i></b>  <b><i>Seconded: Councillor Vincent</i></b>  <b><i>All councillors present in agreement</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standing Orders – drafted version based on NALC recommended model will be circulated for councillors to review, prior to July meeting for agreement.</li> <li>• Privacy Statement – version will be circulated for councillors to review, prior to July meeting for agreement.</li> <li>• Practitioners Guide 2025, use of gov.uk email addresses – More information to be found and circulated to councillors for discussion at the July meeting.</li> <li>• Planning Policy – due for review.</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy – due for review</li> </ul>
11	<p><b><u>PLAY PARK UPDATE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SH reported that he has regularly been up to look at the ongoing situation with the drainage pipes and recently had to cut out some more that had been exposed. He reported that the drainage in its current state isn't causing problems when it rains as the water finds its way to the existing outlet. An option for the future would be to completely re-install the drainage, but it would be a costly and potentially non beneficial exercise. SH has priced up the cost of putting in more wood chip and the prices range between £113.93 to £174 inc VAT &amp; delivery, councillors agreed that this is quite expensive and potentially not needed at this time. SH agreed to rake over the current wood chip to level it out and will continue to monitor the situation.</li> <li>• Charlie Adey, of the play park committee, has been looking into having a shelter over the picnic benches within the play park and will continue to explore the options and report back to the council in due course. All councillors approved a shelter being fitted.</li> <li>• Basket ball hoop in wild flower meadow for teenagers use – a suggestion has been put forward, but councillors are not in agreement with this as there is already a lot of other equipment and also do not feel this is the right location.</li> <li>• RoSPA – The report is due to take place this month, SH will update in July once the report has been issued.</li> </ul>
12	<p><b><u>VILLAGE GREEN UPDATE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small oak tree at entrance to Village Hall request to move – the tree was planted over five years ago, but there are concerns about the size it will grow to and any future problems it may cause within the VH grounds. The request is to relocate to the Village Green where it will have more space. Councillors are in agreement for the tree to be moved and will need to be completed in the autumn to provide the best chance of survival and a digger will be required. Councillor Vincent will advise of the best location on the Village Green. The Village Hall have advised that if the tree does not survive they would look to plant another tree as a replacement.</li> </ul>
13	<p><b><u>FOOTPATHS UPDATE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SH advised that a new representative has come forward from the community who is Leonora Stewart. Leonora introduced herself as she was in attendance, SH thanked Leonora for stepping forward and taking on the role. Councillors also wish to thank Rachel Graham for her commitment to being the representative for many years.</li> <li>• Dorset Council gate opportunity – currently there is an opportunity from Dorset Council to support the replacement of stiles &amp; gates on footpaths. They will match any gate replacement that takes place (on a 3 for 3 basis) which means for 3 gates paid for by LPC another 3 would be replaced and paid for by DCC.</li> </ul>

	Leigh will consider replacing 6 gates in total, to begin with. Each gate costs approximately £200 and this could be funded from unallocated funds. SH asked SV & Leonora to look into this scheme along with possible locations and report back at the next meeting.
14	<b><u>RIVERS UPDATE</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SV advised that he receives information from Wessex Water and the Environment Agency and is aware of funding opportunities for projects.</li> <li>SV advised there is work being carried out in the parish installing leaky dams &amp; swells.</li> <li>SV is going to attend webinars and will feedback at the next meeting.</li> </ul>
15	<b><u>TRANSPORT</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wriggle Valley Bus Project update – there are no current updates as awaiting data of the usage of the service. Data should be available from Yetminster Parish Council soon.</li> </ul>
16	<b><u>PARISH TRAFFIC CALMING AND SPEED AWARENESS</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update on 20mph speed limit application – confirmation has been received from Dorset Council to confirm that the application from Leigh Parish Council has been received and registered. SH will update in July with any further progress.</li> <li>Signage and Road markings – SH advised that DCC have now installed the pedestrian on road signs on the Chetnole &amp; Yetminster entrances into the village. The Totnell entrance is still without a sign, which SH is looking into. SH also advised that the give way road markings at the Cross junction have now been re-painted after the road was resurfaced nearly 2 years ago.</li> <li>“Please slow down” signs – SH reported that he has been in touch with DCC, following a recent email about a new scheme, regarding signage within the village. He will provide an update at the next meeting, when more information should be available.</li> </ul>
17	<b><u>INFORMATION CIRCULATED</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DAPTC Newsletters</li> <li>Communications from Councillor Kippax</li> </ul>
18	<b><u>CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED.</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information of crime within the local area – there has been an incident in Leigh which is the theft of a listed structure. A listed milestone has been taken from Bailey Ridge and unfortunately there are not any lines of enquiry currently.</li> </ul>
19	<b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clerk confirmation in post – SH advised that clerk has now been in the post for 12 months and therefore the probation period has passed. All councillors were in agreement to confirm KE in the permanent position of clerk to the parish council and thanked her for her work so far and taking on the role.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Proposed: Councillor Humphries</i></b>  <b><i>Seconded: Councillor Southwell</i></b>  <b><i>All councillors present in agreement</i></b></p>
20	<b><u>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS IN LEIGH VILLAGE HALL:</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 July at 1900</li> <li>9 September at 1900</li> <li>11 November at 1900</li> </ul>

Meeting closed at 2025

Signed.....

Steve Humphries 08 July 2025

Chairman, Leigh parish council

