

<u>MINUTES</u> <u>LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MEETING</u> <u>TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026 AT 19.00</u>	
	<p><u>Present – Councillors</u> Steve Humphries (SH) – Chairman Alfie Southwell (AS) Alan Bennett (AB) Leonora Stewart (LS) Julie Taylor (JT)</p> <p><u>Clerk</u> Kaye Elston (KE)</p> <p>Dorset Councillor Chris Kippax (until 19.45) Members of the public: 2</p>
1.	<p><u>OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair thanked everyone for attending and welcomed the audience to the meeting. • SH declared a conflict of interest when it came to item 6.4, regarding a grant request the parish council has received from the school that his daughter attends. • Chair advised there is still a vacancy on the parish council, if anyone would like to consider joining.
2.	<p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sam Vincent (SV) – these were accepted.
3.	<p><u>LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES 11 NOVEMBER 2025 AND MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of 11 November 2025 Leigh Parish Council meeting were formally approved and signed by the Chair. • Actions from the last meeting are covered on the agenda.
4.	<p><u>DORSET COUNCILLOR CHRISTOPHER KIPPAX</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset Council will produce a press release regarding the 2026/27 budget. They are making investments in social care for children and adults, highways and generating employment opportunities. The running costs for 2026/27 are £482 million, and 60% of these costs are providing social care for children and adults. Car park charges have been frozen for the forthcoming financial year. • Meeting for local parish council Chairs – Councillor Kippax had a meeting arranged to enable parish councils to potentially work together, but due to the weather, this had to be postponed. Councillor Kippax will rearrange a date and advise Chairs. • Councillor Kippax advised he is working with some residents in the village on an individual basis. • Budget from central government for highways – c. £115 million has been put aside for Dorset’s roads. Councillor Kippax is to confirm exactly how much will be allocated in total and per annum.

5.

FINANCES OVERVIEW

5.1 Reconciliation of bank account

Council approved the Bank Reconciliation:

£17,573.72 (as at 31.12.2025)

5.2. Sums allocated to various sub accounts

On 01.09.2025 the sums allocated to the sub accounts stood at:

Play Park	£1,145.08
Village Green	£519.29
Community Infrastructure Funds	-
Repair and Replace Fund	£5,639.66
National Lottery Environment Talks Fund	-
FUNDS SUMMARY TOTAL	£7,304.03
Non-ring-fenced funds	£10,269.69

5.3 National Lottery funding being held on behalf of the Play Park Committee

- Following the last meeting and agreement to confirm with the Play Park Committee the exact amount that needs to go back to the National Lottery, councillors set up the refund and paid back £8,000. Amount confirmed by Charlie Adey, as the Play Park Committee has now dissolved. The £8,000 has now been removed from the Play Park Committee line in the allocated sums at 5.2 above.
- The repayment of £8,000 was then retrospectively agreed in terms of authorising the payment out of the bank account.
Proposed: Cllr A Southwell
Seconded: Cllr A Bennett
All councillors present in agreement and unanimously agreed with the process that had been followed.
- Clerk advised via email between meetings that this payment from the bank account should have been authorised in a full parish council meeting. This was confirmed by internal auditor and Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.
- AB wanted to record that the intention of the parish council was to support the Play Park Committee by holding the money, as they were struggling to set up a bank account while in operation. The parish council had done the same with other organisations within the village in the past.

5.4 Grass-Cutting Contract

- SH has circulated a draft contract, and councillors were in agreement to accept the contract.
Proposed: Cllr S Humphries
Seconded: Cllr J Taylor
All councillors present in agreement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are three potential contractors to send the contract out to for tenders, with a return deadline of 06.03.2026. Clerk to send out to contractors in good time for completion and return of tender.
6.	<p><u>INVOICES RECEIVED – PRE-APPROVED TO PAY</u></p> <p>6.1 The following invoices were presented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TA Holder (03.11.25) Grass cutting – £236.00 • Lloyds Bank (18.11.25) Monthly service charge – £4.25 • HMRC (28.11.25) PAYE – £93.60 • Kaye Elston (28.11.25) Clerk salary – £140.80 • Sarah Brockway (28.11.25) Payroll fee – £20 • DAPTC (01.12.25) Training/conference fee – £75.00 • PWL Loan (10.12.25) Loan repayment – £1,231.47 • Lloyds Bank (19.12.25) Service charge – £4.25 • Sarah Brockway (29.12.25) Payroll fee – £20 • HMRC (31.12.25) PAYE – £117.20 • Kaye Elston (31.12.25) Clerk salary – £175.80 • National Lottery (31.12.25) Grant repayment – £8,000 <p>6.2 Forthcoming payments for advanced approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire of village hall fees for parish council meetings Clerk received an email during the meeting to advise the invoice has been delayed but will be sent within a week. Councillors agreed to authorise a payment of up to £300. Proposed: Cllr A Bennett Seconded: Cllr A Southwell All councillors present in agreement. • Legal fees for purchase of land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quotes for legal fees have been received from four solicitors. The potential variations between prices are due to uncertainty about the amount of work involved in reviewing legal documents drawn up by the solicitors for the vendor. ○ The fees quoted by the solicitors range between £1,292 and £3,600. ○ AB has enquired with a retired solicitor in relation to the costs quoted, who believes further exploration is required. AB agreed to follow up and report back to the parish council. ○ To ensure that the process can commence and not wait for the next meeting, there was an agreement to pay legal fees up to £4,000. The decision about which solicitor, councillors agreed, can be determined via email. ○ Proposed: Cllr A Southwell Seconded: Cllr A Bennett All councillors present in agreement. ○ Councillors agreed to request donations from the parish to support the legal fees to secure the use of the land for the parish. Once the decision has been made on solicitor and the costs are clearer, then the request can go into the <i>Wriggle Valley Magazine</i>.

6.3 Payments/income received

- None.

6.4 Grant requests

- Support for Plus Bus funded by Yetminster Parish Council – JT reported that there had been no further information, despite many attempts at contacting them. There has not been any data provided on the uptake of the service from Leigh. Therefore, councillors were in agreement that they are not in a position to contribute.
- St Andrew's Primary School – Clerk has received email from the Chair of the PTFA to advise they are building an outside classroom and would like the parish council to consider a grant. The cost will be £12,000. Councillors discussed and agreed to contribute £100.

Proposed: Cllr J Taylor

Seconded: Cllr A Bennett

All councillors present in agreement.

- Request from St Andrew's Church for a grant to support its work within the village – discussed by councillors, who agreed to make a grant in the sum of £420.

Proposed: Cllr A Bennett

Seconded: Cllr L Stewart

All councillors present in agreement.

6.5 Budget monitoring 2025/26

- The data has now been entered into the financial spreadsheet and circulated to councillors. Budget lines are within forecasted spend.

6.6. Budget planning for 2026/27

- Proposed budget presented at November meeting and revised at this meeting, as the end-of-year budget spend can now be more accurately predicted.
- The parish council budget has been monitored closely during the current financial year and resulted in a modest shortfall between budget prediction and actual spend in the sum of £196, which can be covered through reserves. The council is in a strong reserves position, through careful monitoring, and therefore agreed that any increase in the precept request needs to be in line with inflation.
- All councillors thanked AS for preparing budget figures of in-year expenditure and predicted spending for 2026/27.

6.7 Precept request for 2026/27

- Following the above discussion, councillors agreed that they are unlikely to need the reserves in 2026/27, except for capital expenditure. The only planned expense at this time is for the legal fees to purchase the freehold for the village green. Therefore, councillors were in agreement to request a precept in the sum of £11,500, which represents an increase of 3.5% for Band D properties. Annual cost for Band D properties would be £45.56.

Proposed: Cllr A Southwell

Seconded: Cllr J Taylor

All councillors present in agreement.

	<p>6.8. Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance</p> <p>Ahead of the meeting, SH circulated a letter of thanks from the Air Ambulance following the money raised at the recent defibrillator and CPR training course.</p>
7.	<p><u>AUDIT 2025/26</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of internal auditor 2025/26 Internal auditor has emailed the Clerk to enquire if the council would like to contract their services for the 2025/26 audit. This has previously been agreed by councillors. The costs are based on the amount of precept a parish council receives, and therefore, the cost will be £145. Clerk to complete contract and submit to the auditor. • Risk Assessments and Asset Register These have been updated by AS and circulated to all councillors. AB has passed comment on the risk assessments regarding councillor recruitment. AS to review and update accordingly and recirculate. Both documents to be finalised and approved at the March meeting.
8.	<p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P/PAAC/2025/05451 Barn Willow Tree Farm, Chetnole Road, Leigh – Change of use and conversion of agricultural building to dwelling house (Use Class C3). Referred to Planning Inspectorate with an opportunity for the parish council to submit further comments if required. Previous parish council comment was ‘No Comment’. Comments to be submitted by 30.01.2026. Councillors in agreement to submit a further comment to the Planning Inspectorate that they support the application, as when the barn is converted into a house, it will be an asset to the village. • P/LBC/2025/07576 Guyers Cottage, Chetnole Road, Leigh, Sherborne DT9 6HL – Replacement 5no. internal doors to first floor. No objections. • P/FULL/2025/06127 Drummers Farm, Batcombe Road, Leigh, Sherborne, DT9 6JA – Extensions to existing slurry lagoon. Comment submitted – No Comment. • P/VOC/2025/06896 Brookside Farm, Chetnole Road, Leigh, Sherborne DT9 6HJ – Erect single-storey side extension with roof lantern and alterations to farmhouse. Remedial and alteration works to barns (with variation of condition 2 of planning permission P/HOU/2025/04977). Comment submitted – No Comment. <p><u>Unauthorised use of land</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Poplars, Three Gates – There has been no update on the unauthorised use of land at this property for quite some time from Dorset Council. • Land south of Brookfield Farm, Wriggle River Lane – There has been some use of this piece of land for the past few years without an official planning application. A communication has already been sent to Dorset Council, but the Enforcement Officer has not provided an update since 2022. It now appears that someone has been living there, as a letter box has been installed. And therefore, in time it will become an established development. AB said he will write to Dorset Council Chief Executive about the two locations, to ask for an update on the matter and what action they are intending to take.

9.	<p><u>EMAILS AND POTENTIAL CHANGE TO GOV.UK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the previous meeting, SH contacted Russell Jepson to set up the agreed email addresses for parish councillors. Unfortunately, KE had not advised that they should contain <i>Leigh Parish Council</i> until after they had been set up. However, it is likely that this can be amended from the current <i>leighvillage.org.uk</i> arrangement. • Clarification from DAPTC advises that councillors, at this stage, do not need gov.uk email addresses, due to the size of the parish council, and that only the Clerk would need a dedicated email address. SH expressed that this should have been brought to light at the very beginning of discussions last year, as the parish council is currently not obliged to have dedicated email accounts for every councillor. • The Leigh Village website is owned by the parish council, but the domain is registered in the name of the current administrator. • The parish council thanked Russell for all his work behind the scenes setting up email addresses and administering the website in a volunteer capacity.
10.	<p><u>PLAY PARK UPDATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unused grant money to the Play Park Committee from the National Lottery, in the sum of £8,000, has now been returned. Charlie Adey has confirmed that the remaining balance of £230.01, which belonged to the now dissolved Play Park Committee, is to transfer over to the parish council play park subaccount.
11.	<p><u>VILLAGE GREEN UPDATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benches on green – SH previously reported that there are two benches that are currently in poor condition, and which he has screwed back together, but ideally, they need to be replaced. The Pop Inn pop-up pub has offered to donate £1,000 to purchase new benches. The ones proposed are recycled plastic and are to be one bench and one octagonal picnic table. All councillors in agreement to accept the donation so that the parish council can then purchase them for the benefit of the village. The Pop Inn would also like to donate a picnic table to the village hall, so there may be the opportunity to do a bulk order and get a discount on the three items. Julia Jepson, from the Pop Inn, to confirm the details. • Goals for use on the village green – the Pop Inn has offered to donate £1,000 to the parish council to purchase goals for use on the green for the benefit of the village. They would be adult-sized, so that all members of the village could use them. Julia Jepson has suggested two 16ft x 6ft goals. However, AB suggested these would be too large and would potentially dominate the green. Following discussions, councillors agreed on 12ft x 4ft goals that are of a ‘temporary and portable’ type, which can be moved around the green and packed away, if required. <p>The parish council are extremely grateful to the Pop Inn for their kind offer of donating towards both of these initiatives, and to Julia Jepson for attending the meeting to discuss the options.</p>
12.	<p><u>FOOTPATHS UPDATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Bridge Drove BOAT – in early December the surface repair and gully-dredging works took place. The surface is still loose and needs to settle in. It is hoped that vehicles obey the current closure and do not use the drove. • On 18/19 December the pedestrian bridge on Long Bridge Drove broke free. Dorset Council were informed the following morning by LS. Dorset Council have put up signage to inform users that the bridge is closed. However, there

	<p>is evidence of people trying to use it, which has resulted in the bridge now sinking down the bank and becoming very unstable. LS has updated Dorset Council again on the current state of the bridge and asked for an update on any repair works. Dorset Council Senior Ranger Stuart Semple has advised that he has authorised the same contractors that carried out the surface works to re-site the bridge, but he cannot confirm a date for these works at the moment. He has also said that he is hoping to replace the bridge within the next financial year and will keep us posted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure survey – this was completed by LS and submitted to Dorset Council, and she is still awaiting a response.
13.	<p><u>ANNUAL LITTER PICK</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been organised by Andrew Little on behalf of the parish council and is therefore covered by the parish council's insurance. • Councillors wished to express their thanks to Andrew for organising the litter pick once again, and to all the volunteers who helped in this event.
14.	<p><u>RIVERS UPDATE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No updates.
15.	<p><u>TRANSPORT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No further updates (see section 6.4).
16.	<p><u>PARISH TRAFFIC CALMING AND SPEED AWARENESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on 20 mph speed limit application – no further updates, as application will go before the Dorset Council panel in February. • Please Slow Down signs – SH and JT have put together a short survey and are in the process of sending it out to all those who replied to the previous speed survey. Responses are due by early February, and then any feedback will be passed on to Dorset Council Survey. • Pedestrian on Road signs – the final sign has now been put in place on Totnell Hill, after chasing Dorset Council for over twelve months. • Totnell Hill – a resident has raised concerns regarding the recent resurfacing works and does not feel it is adequate as a non-slip surface. The resident advised it is too slippery in freezing conditions. SH has advised the resident that the road is on the Community Links gritting route and has sent the email on to Dorset Highways for their response. • Gritting between Totnell Hill and Longburton – this has been an ongoing enquiry, but Ian Newport from Dorset Council has confirmed that it is on the Community Links gritting route.
17.	<p><u>INFORMATION CIRCULATED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAPTC newsletters • NALC newsletters • Communications from Councillor Kippax • Dorset Council – statement on the relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and the emerging Dorset Council Local Plan • CPRE newsletter December 2025 • Dorset Council – Town & Parish Council Forum for Planning Building Control – dates available to book • Engineering work on Stake Ford Bridge, in Yetminster – investigations to take place at the beginning of 2026.

18.	<p><u>CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorset Council Asset List – circulated among councillors; further clarification required. • Wriggle River Lane, Batcombe – proposed temporary closure on 18.02.2026 for Wessex Water.
19.	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Andrew’s Primary School approached the parish council to ask if a councillor could go into school between 24 and 28 November to talk about how a parish council works – AB and Councillor Kippax went to the school, both saying it was very worthwhile to engage with the children. • Devolution Seminar and Community Governance Survey – AB to contact DAPTC for further information.
20.	<p><u>DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Next scheduled meeting at 19.00 on Tuesday 10 March 2026.</p> <p>Subsequent 2026 meetings (village hall booked) as agreed: 12 May, 14 July, 8 September, 10 November.</p>

Meeting closed at 20.50.

Signed.....

Steve Humphries 10 March 2026
Chair, Leigh Parish Council