

LEIGH ON MENDIP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held at Memorial Hall on Monday 16th September, 2024

Present: Cllrs Vicki Taylor (Chair), Paula Freeland, Estelle Kirby, Iain Kirby, Sue Sweet

Attending: Cllr Barry Clarke Somerset Council); Joe McGhee (Clerk); Tom Kemp (Tree Officer); 3 members of the public.

1 Welcome by the Chair

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

Cllr Philip Ham (Somerset Council).

3 Absent

None.

4 (a) To receive declaration of interest from Councillors on items on the agenda

None.

(b) To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interests

Cllr Vicki Taylor has an approved request for dispensation in relation to Leigh On Mendip Memorial Hall until June 2027.

(c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate

None.

5 Public Session

There were no remarks from the public at this point.

6 County Councillor Reports

Cllr Clarke delivered a verbal report.

Somerset Council had been without enforcement officers for a period, but now has 6 (4 council employees and 2 agency staff). They have a heavy workload of 1059 enforcement cases to deal with.

Somerset Council is undertaking a number of property sales to help pay for the capitalisation grant among other things.

A consultation exercise is underway on plans to reduce the council tax reduction for certain people qualifying from 100% to 75%. It is understood this could cause significant hardship for some people. Parishes are being asked to respond to the consultation request; the deadline for responses is 1st October.

It is estimated that 4% of those attending to vote in the general election lost the right to do so because they did not have appropriate photo ID.

The national government is extending the household support fund until the end of March 2025.

The Enhanced Highway Maintenance Pilot is underway. It is expected that parishes, particularly smaller parishes, will find it difficult to afford this service.

7 Monthly update from Tom Kemp – Parish Tree Officer

The Tree Officer is writing a report for the Recreation Field Committee with recommendations on dealing with a damaged beech tree at the entrance to the field.

Ash trees on the Recreation Field have been monitored for ash dieback and seem to be showing signs of improvement.

There is a potential problem with light pollution at Willmotts Transport, with wildlife in nearby trees becoming disorientated by bright lights which are on overnight. TK will send a note to Cllr Taylor with a view to her sending a letter to Willmotts.

8 To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 15th July, 2024, previously circulated (Attachment 1)

Resolved. Confirmed.

9 Matters arising from the minutes but not on the agenda.

None.

10 Planning Applications – If other planning applications are received between the date of this notice and the date of the meeting, they may be considered.

Brief remarks are given on each application along with the council's recommendation on it to the Somerset Council planning board. Full remarks are available for each application in the comments applied on it on behalf of the council by the Clerk at the planning portal on the Somerset Council website.

(a) 2024/1368/FUL

Erection of 1 no. single storey holiday let and field shelter.

Land at 367365 145942, Old Wells Road, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

Council considered that this application doesn't fit with local plan policy for such a rural setting; that it's design and appearance are inconsistent with a mobile home; that it is unacceptable that there is no information on dealing with waste disposal or sewage; and that there could be a significant increase in traffic risk. Cllr Freeland proposed recommending refusal; Cllr E Kirby seconded. Council unanimously resolved to recommend refusal of the application.

(b) 2024/1421/VRC

Variation of condition 2 (Plans List) on consent 2023/0375/FUL (Change of use to commercial livery and erection of new stable building and associated facilities.)

Condition Number(s): Condition 2

Conditions(s) Removal:

We wish to amend the location and site plans referred to in condition 2 to allow for a small change in the area of land permitted for equine use to revert to agricultural use to allow this area to be available for agricultural operations. No other variations proposed. We propose to leave red line area as is but to assign an area of land within to be retained as agricultural land.

See cover letter.

Land at 368354 147875, Pitten Street, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset

Council had no issues with this application on the grounds of design/appearance, highways impact or amenity. Cllr I Kirby proposed recommending approval; Cllr E Kirby seconded.

Council unanimously resolved to recommend approval of the application.

(c) 2024/1472/FUL

Erection of 1 no. detached bungalow

Land at 1 Park Hayes, Leigh On Mendip, Radstock, Somerset

Cllr Freeland took council through comments made on an earlier similar development of a bungalow in this area. As with that development, no issues were found on the grounds of design/appearance, highways impact or amenity. Cllr Freeland proposed the council recommend approval; Cllr I Kirby seconded. Council unanimously resolved to recommend approval of the application.

(d) 2024/1375/HSE

Erection of detached garage.

1 Apple Meadow View, Park Hayes, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset

It was noted that this was the same as a previous build. No issues were found on the grounds of design/appearance, highways impact or amenity. Cllr Freeland proposed the council

recommend approval; Cllr Taylor seconded. Council unanimously resolved to recommend approval of the application.

29/24-25

(e) 2024/1125/FUL

Barn conversion to a new dwellinghouse

Barn at Knapp Hill Farm, Knap Hill, Leigh On Mendip, Radstock, Somerset

It was noted that other conversions had been done here sympathetically. No issues were found on the grounds of design/appearance, highways impact or amenity. Cllr Taylor proposed the council recommend approval; Cllr Freeland seconded. Council unanimously resolved to recommend approval of the application.

(f) 2024/1471/FUL

Erection of 4 detached dwellings (bungalows)

Land rear of Ivy Cottage, Quarry Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Radstock, Somerset.

Concern was expressed about the relationship of the development to St Giles, the Grade 1 listed church, as well as about the principle of a new development of multiple houses in Leigh On Mendip and its sustainability. There was also concern that the Conservation Officer did not appear to have been consulted. It was noted that the application described the houses as 'self-build' when they aren't. An increased traffic risk resulting from the development was also noted. There were no concerns in terms of amenity. Cllr Taylor proposed the council recommend refusal of the application; Cllr I Kirby seconded. Council unanimously resolved to recommend refusal of the application.

11 Planning Applications – Decisions to be noted from Somerset Council

None.

12 Finance

(a) To approve (or not) bank reconciliation to 10 Sep 2024 (Attachment 2)

Resolved. Approved.

(b) To approve (or not) receipts and payments as identified in the Cashflow 07 Jul 2024 to 10 Sep 2024 (Attachment 3).

Resolved. Approved.

13 Clerk's / Councillors' Report

(a) Despite a comprehensive letter, sent on the advice of an NS&I agent, describing the history of attempts to access funds in the council's investment account and requesting the closure of the account and transfer of the balance to the council's Unity Trust current account, NS&I have not carried this out. A formal complaint has been raised, again on the advice of an NS&I agent, which will allegedly allow better communication and achieve account closure. NS&I promise to resolve the complaint within 40 working days, but they will be contacted regularly by the clerk to move to a resolution.

(b) The council's FSCS eligibility was reconfirmed with Unity Trust Bank.

(c) Confirmation was received from PKF Littlejohn, the external auditor, of the council exempt status with respect to external audit.

(d) Multiple road closures were posted on the usual channels.

(e) The council's registration with the Information Commissioner's Office was renewed automatically. Contact details were also updated.

(f) A new speedwatch sign was procured and delivered to M Carter.

(g) Surveys of grit bins and dog/litter bins were carried out by Cllrs E and I Kirby and the information sent on by the clerk to the relevant departments at Somerset Council.

- (h) At the request of Somerset Council Democratic Services, parish council information on the Somerset Council website was checked and verified. This included contact information and the links to the Register of Members' Interests forms for councillors.

14 To Be Discussed / Resolved

- (a) Draft Forward Plan (Attachment 4 - Cllr I Kirby).
Discussed and adopted. Cllr I Kirby will work with the Clerk to use the forward plan to help drive meeting agendas.
- (b) Enhance Highways Maintenance Pilot
The Clerk is to register the council's interest in having volunteers trained in some aspects of highways maintenance.
The Clerk is to post on council and community Facebook pages providing the link for members of the public to report potholes which seem to be a safety hazard.
- (c) Email from J Stevens on taking on maintenance provision
T Kemp will attempt to clarify the square metres of the grass area currently cut by Idverde to compare against that of the specification which Somerset Council have in Leigh On Mendip (relative to the fact that the Parish Council already pays Idverde for cemetery maintenance).
- (d) Shepton LCN Emergency Planning Workshop (Cllr Taylor)
Cllr Taylor reported that the emergency planning workshop was useful but more relevant to a town or larger community than a small parish council such as Leigh On Mendip. Clerk will check for slide pack and forward. Cllr Taylor will draft suggestion for emergency planning considerations for Leigh On Mendip. This will be on the agenda for the November.
- (e) PCC Consultation Questionnaire (Attachment 5)
Councillors have received this directly and can respond individually. Cllr Taylor will respond on behalf of the Parish Council.
- (f) Appointment of internal auditor
The Clerk suggested that council reappoint Eleanor Greene of Do the Numbers Ltd, who was internal auditor for 2023/24, to be auditor for 2024/25, subject to agreement of a suitable date and venue for the audit. Cllr I Kirby proposed that she be appointed; Cllr Taylor seconded. Council approved the appointment unanimously.
- (g) Speedwatch report (Attachment 6)
The Speedwatch report was noted, and Cllr Taylor offered a vote of thanks to the Speedwatch team for they work it does. Cllr Freeland indicated a speedwatch sign had been moved further up the village to make it more effective. She will undergo speedwatch training.
- (h) Better Buses for Somerset (Cllr Kirby)
Cllr I Kirby referred to a draft bus timetable which had been proposed by the campaign Better Buses for Somerset. He invited councillors to pass comments to him on the timetable and email which it accompanied, perhaps including comments where possible from conversations with parishioners on bus services.
Cllr Sweet will pursue details of the community transport scheme with a view to publishing promoting information about it to the parish.

15 Matters to report / items for next agenda.

- Cemetery development (Cllr E Kirby)
- Action Plan and review of Welcome Booklet (Cllr Sweet)

16 Date and time of next meeting: Monday 21st October, 2024 in the Memorial Hall starting at 7.00pm.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions; Equal opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, and any disability), Crime and Disorder, Health and Safety and Human Rights.