

LEIGH ON MENDIP PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held at Memorial Hall on Monday 28th April, 2025

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

Attending: Joe McGhee (Clerk); Cllr Barry Clarke, Cllr Philip Ham (Somerset Council); Tom Kemp (Tree and Biodiversity Adviser).

1 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

None.

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.

Cllr Vicki Trundle has an approved request for dispensation in relation to Leigh On Mendip Recreation Field Committee until March 2029.

(c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate.

None.

5 Public Session

No members of the public present.

6 County Councillor Reports

Cllr Clarke reported:

- Somerset Council (SC) continues with implementing a uniform parking policy. This is proving unpopular because it means charges are being introduced in some situations where they didn't apply up until now. A suggestion that Mondays should be free was rejected.
- The Household Relief Fund has been extended for a year.
- A tree planting strategy has been implemented which aims to see 7,500 trees to be planted each year. The understanding is that around 240 have been planted so far this year.
- £40M was lost on the sale of properties as part of the budgeting exercise. This must be repaid to central government as part of the budget settlement.
- Cllr Ham added a number of points:
- The council has a new Finance Officer, Nicola Hicks.
- There have been 551 redundancies as part of the budget rationalisation exercise; 80 of these have been compulsory.
- There is a £3M project underway to ensure all employees are on the correct grade/salary.
- The deficit next year is currently projected to be slightly over £100M.
- Cllr Ham has requested a refresh of the white lines on the Wells/Frome road.
- Final discussions on the boundary changes planned by the Boundary Commission will take place between June and September. The changes are significant. Detailed information is available on the Local Government Boundary Commission website – lgbce.org.uk. If councillors want to comment they can do so via the website or pass comments on to Cllr Clarke or Cllr Ham.
- Following an update of the planning application assessment process, and a direction from

central government towards presumption of approval, the likelihood that a given application will be approved has increased.

2/25-26

7 Monthly update from Tom Kemp – Parish Tree Officer

Discussions were held, at the churchyard, with the Clerk about securing a new contractor for the grounds maintenance for the current season.

A cherry tree in Park Hayes, on Somerset Council land, may need to be reduced. Clerk will pass details of possible contact to TK.

Significant hedge destruction has been noticed on the border of Whatley and Nunney parishes; TK has reported this to Somerset Council.

8 To confirm the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 17th March, 2025, 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.

(a) 2025/0613/VRC

Removal of condition 3 (Self-Build/Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Development) to consent 2024/1471/FUL for erection of 4 self-build detached dwellings.

Land at 369339 147367, Quarry Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

This planning application was previously discussed. Council resolved to defer to the planning officer's assessment for this variation. Clerk to apply appropriate comment at the Somerset Council planning portal.

Cllr Freeland will draft comments on behalf of the Parish Council on the "self-build" status and biodiversity net gain (BNG) and how they are considered in the planning process; Clerk will forward appropriately for the Council to Somerset Council.

11 Planning Applications – Decisions to be noted from Somerset Council

(a) 2025/0062/HSE

Single storey extension and alter access to create off road parking

1 Spring Cottages, Blackers Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Radstock, Somerset BA3 5QU

Decision. Approval.

(b) 2025/0242/PAH

The erection of a single storey rear extension, which would extend beyond the rear wall of the original house by 5 metres, with a maximum height of 2.95 metres and an eaves height of 2.95 metres.

The Dovecote, Leigh Street, Leigh On Mendip, Radstock, Somerset BA3 5QP

Decision. Prior Approval Not Required.

(c) 2024/0478/FUL

Propose general purpose barn (retrospective)

Land at 368121 146641, Tadhil Lane, Stoke St Michael, Shepton Mallet, Somerset

Decision. Approval.

(d) 2025/0162/FUL

Alteration to Leigh St vehicular entrance & provision of new timber entrance gate, pedestrian timber gate and associated works

Great House Farm, Hollybush Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA3 5QZ

Decision. Approval.

(e) 2025/0163/LBC

Alteration to Leigh St vehicular entrance & provision of new timber entrance gate, pedestrian timber gate and associated works

Great House Farm, Hollybush Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA3 5QZ

Decision. Approval.

(f) 2025/0172/FUL

Installation of surfaced bellmouth, cattlegrid, and new field gate with associated landscaping

Great House Farm, Hollybush Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA3 5QZ

Decision. Approval.

(g) 2024/0527/FUL

Construction of 3m wide track 150m to the northwest of the existing combined commercial/residential access & run east for 375m

Land at Whitehole Farm, Whitehole Hill, Leigh On Mendip, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA3 5QE

Decision. Application Refused

(h) 2025/0612/APP

Approval of details reserved by condition 7 (Wildlife Protection and Enhancement) on consent 2024/1471/FUL

Land at 369339 147367, Quarry Lane, Leigh On Mendip, Radstock, Somerset.

Decision. Approval.

All decisions noted.

12 Finance and Annual Reporting

- (a)** To approve (or not) bank reconciliation at 23 Apr 2025 (Attachment 2)

Resolved. Approved.

- (b)** To approve (or not) receipts and payments as identified in the Cashflow 12 Mar 2025 to 23 Apr 2025 (Attachment 3).

Resolved. Approved.

- (c)** To approve (or not) budget review to 31 Mar 2025 (Attachment 4).

Resolved. Approved.

- (d)** To sign as appropriate and approve (or not) forms and supporting information for the Annual Governance and Accountability Review (AGAR) as shown in Attachment 5, namely:

- The Certificate of Exemption from external audit for 2024/25
- The Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25
- The Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- The Accounting Statements 2024/25
- Bank Reconciliation at 31 March 2025
- The Explanation of Variances
- The Notice of Public Rights

Resolved. Documents signed as appropriate and all approved.

13 Clerk's / Councillors' Report

- (a)** The annual internal audit was carried out on 8th April. The audit was straightforward. Comments from the auditor, and subsequent actions by the Clerk, were:

- a. No member of the public should be named in minutes, even if as in the case of planning applicants their names are already in the public domain. Clerk will ensure that this is the case in future.
- b. Council reserves are now significant (some 120% of annual revenue) and some thought should be given to exploiting some of these to the benefit of the parish. This will be reviewed by council during the coming months.

- c. Links from councillor names on the council website to the appropriate Register of Members Interests forms on the Somerset Council website no longer worked (this was because of a change at the SC website). The Clerk updated the links, including adding a new link for Cllr Trundle, and they are now working properly.
- (b) The annual precept of £14,327 for 2025/26 was deposited in the council's current account.
- (c) Information was published on Facebook and the council website about the Halecombe Quarry Community Fund, inviting groups to apply.
- (d) All planning application comments decided at the meeting of 17th March were applied at the Somerset Council planning portal.
- (e) A request went to the manager of Halecombe Quarry for more notice of blasting events, and he undertook to provide as much notice as possible.
- (f) The final submissions for 2024/25 to HMRC were made, P60 information provided, PAYE software updated and the migration carried out to the 2025/26 tax year.
- (g) There was a flurry of road closure announcements in April at fairly short notice; they were posted within a day to the usual channels.
- (h) Somerset Council requested information on road markings which need to be refreshed. Councillors have carried out surveys across the parish and recommendations passed by the Clerk to Traffic Management at Somerset Council.
- (i) The council's membership of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) was renewed.

14 To Be Discussed / Resolved

- (a) Annual Parish Meeting; newsletter (Cllr Taylor).
The newsletter has been published and councillors will hand deliver to all houses in the parish prior to the parish meeting on 17th May.
- (b) Parking/speed restrictions (including 20mph signage) at the school (Cllr E Kirby).
It was noted that Somerset Council won't pay for signage, but the Parish Council can choose to do so. It would be necessary to liaise with Somerset Council Traffic Management to implement any speed limit changes. Cllr Ham will take this up on behalf of the Parish Council during discussions with Sara Davis of Traffic Management.
- (c) Contact with fire service re width of road at Park Hayes (Clerk).
There has been no further information from the Radstock station manager; Clerk will seek clarification.
- (d) Cemetery development – footpath - update (Cllr E Kirby).
Cllr E Kirby continues to speak to Daniel Gordon on funding to upgrade the footpath, and has spoken to representatives of Whatley Quarry who will see what they can do in terms of supplying materials.
The benches will be installed soon. Cllr Kirby asked for funding of £36 for each of two plaques to go on the benches indicating they were funded by Whatley Quarry; Council resolved to approve the funding.
There is also a proposal to plaques to be positioned at either end of the cemetery; Cllr Kirby will report on this at the next meeting. She will also have discussions with a contact on Bellfield about proposed gates for the new cemetery.
The planting design produced by T Kemp will be revisited with a view to developing an implementation plan.
An application will have to be submitted for a dropped kerb at Bellfield to ease access to the new cemetery.
- (e) Community notice board – sketch and costings from Bell Inn landlord (Cllr Taylor).
Continued to next meeting.

(f) Statement on biodiversity (T Kemp, Clerk).

T Kemp will reconsider and discuss with the Clerk.

(g) Churchyard/cemetery maintenance (Clerk).

Appointing a contractor for the 2025 season has been inhibited because one of those producing a quotation withdrew shortly before the council meeting. The Clerk will work with Cllr I Kirby to source another quotation as well as securing a further cut of the churchyard/cemetery grass to keep the area tidy until a new contractor is appointed.

T Kemp will consider a proposal for the development of a biodiversity plan for the churchyard/cemetery.

Cutting back of the hedges at the rear of the churchyard/cemetery will be put on the agenda for the next meeting; Cllr Freeland will look into the implications of that with regard to the boundary wall and report to the meeting.

There will be a meeting at the churchyard/cemetery at 6:30 on June 16th, immediately prior to the Parish Council meeting at 7:00.

Maintenance of the existing graves, including the issue of headstones sinking, will be on the agenda of the next Parish Council meeting.

Cllrs Clarke and Ham, and T Kemp, left the meeting at 20:49.

(h) VE Day celebrations.

It was noted that there will be lighting of a beacon in the Recreation Field to celebrate VE Day.

(i) Insurance (Clerk).

There was a discussion on insurance for 2025-26. Council resolved to renew insurance with the current provider, Zurich Municipal, who have maintained the fee at the 2024-25 level. The Clerk will progress payment for renewal.

(j) Quarterly review of community plan.

Notice is now given to the parish of quarry blasting; the Clerk receives notices from the quarry manager and publishes on the website and Facebook pages.

Information on the community bus service has been published on the website.

The possibility of having a repair shop regularly in Coleford and Leigh On Mendip is still being considered. Cllr Taylor will liaise with the Coleford PC Clerk for an update.

Exercise equipment is now in place in Coronation Park.

The whole village is now covered by the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, and the Speedwatch scheme has been in place for some time.

(k) Quarries report update.

This was covered in the last meeting.

The possibility of using quarry-owned space being used for car parking to ease the situation at the school will be taken up at the next liaison meeting with A Cadell, the Tarmac Strategic Planning Manager.

(l) First aid presentation (Clerk).

There had been a suggestion that the Council could arrange a public first aid presentation, including a demonstration of defibrillator use, for the village. It was noted that after the last parish meeting there had been an initiative at the local surgery for people to attend such an event; 6 people expressed an interest and eventually 2 attended. Council resolved not to proceed with such a presentation at this time but to keep the possibility under consideration.

15 Matters to report / items for next agenda.

- LCN update
- New cemetery plaques and gates
- Maintenance of graves in closed cemetery

16 Date and time of next meeting: Monday 19th May, 2025, in the Memorial Hall starting immediately following the Annual Full Council Meeting.

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.