

**LEIGH AND BRANSFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

[www.leighandbransford.org.uk](http://www.leighandbransford.org.uk)

**Minutes of the Annual meeting of Leigh and Bransford Parish Council held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at Leigh & Bransford Memorial Hall**

Present: Councillors: D Fereday, N Christie, P Ralph, N Cresswell, L Bayston, J Sharp

Clerk: Anna Briggs, 4 members of the public

The meeting was opened by the present Chair Cllr Fereday.

- 01/26 Election of Chair for 2026/27  
Nominations were received for Cllr Fereday. Cllr Christie proposed, Cllr Sharp seconded, all in favour. Cllr Fereday was duly elected Chair for 2026/7, he signed his Acceptance of Office form and took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.
- 02/26 Apologies received and accepted for absence from Councillors. Cllrs Brazier, Hawkins, McSweeney and Rouse.
- 03/26 Election of Vice Chair for 2026/7  
Nominations were received for Cllr Christie. Cllr Sharp proposed, Cllr Ralph seconded, all in favour. Cllr Christie was duly elected as Vice-chair for 206/27.
- 04/26 To consider applications for co-option to the Parish Council. The Council considered applications to fill one casual vacancy by co-option. RESOLVED: That Stephen Chandler be co-opted as a Parish Councillor. SC signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting.
- 05/26 a) Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and any Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda (Personal and Prejudicial). None.  
b) Register of Interests. Councillors are reminded of the need to submit their Register of Interests.  
c) To consider any written requests from Councillors to Grant a Dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011) relating to items on the agenda. None.
- 06/26 Public Participation. Residents are invited to address the council on any local matters and Agenda items.  
(Meeting closed for public participation).

A resident raised strong concerns about Phase 2 of Potters Reach, where the proposal has increased from 15 to 28 homes, and where green space by their home could potentially be built on; there's nowhere safe for children to play. There was initial confusion as to who had made the amendments; it was confirmed they were made by MHDC rather than the developers. The Chair outlined the planning history, noting that residents had already undertaken considerable work due to their concerns, and expressing the view that MHDC had handled the situation poorly.

Councillors and residents discussed the matter, with the Parish Council offering guidance on possible next steps (The Chair suggesting they contact Cllr McSweeney who would be very keen to help). Malvern Rise Management Co Ltd also offering support. It was concluded that the Parish Council has no further direct role, and that the issue should be taken forward to the Malvern Hills Planning Committee.

Malvern Rise Management Co Ltd noted ongoing issues with dogs being off lead and instances of fouling. This matter was raised several months ago, and the Parish Council has previously contacted MHDC. **Action:** Clerk to raise the issue again with MHDC.

It was also noted that there is currently limited general signage in place (e.g. regarding the danger of SuDS). ). The Chair stated that he had been in contact with Cotswold Oak Ltd regarding the lack of signage. Chair stated that he was awaiting a response from the developer.

(Meeting re-opened).

#### 07/26 Reports of District and County Councillors

In the absence of both WCC and MHDC, the Chair summarised the submitted reports from Cllrs McSweeney and Rouse. It was noted positively that Cllr McSweeney is now both District and County Councillor. There were no questions or comments from the floor. Both reports are available at the end of these minutes.

08/26 To consider and approve the minutes of March 24<sup>th</sup> Parish Council Meeting. Having been circulated the Minutes were approved unanimously and signed.

#### 09/26 **Somers Terrace:**

Cllr Christie confirmed that bollards will be installed on one side of the road. Cllr McSweeney will confirm the installation timeframe. The Chair added that Cllr McSweeney is already progressing this matter.

#### **Mobile mast / connectivity:**

Cllr Sharp advised that the Nicholson site has been surveyed and pre-application submissions are being prepared for MHDC. The proposed location would improve coverage for Leigh Sinton but not Bransford.

Cllr Sharp noted that in Alfrick, WCC is trialling a temporary wireless “Hot Spots” solution, although this is only for 12 months and requires a local host site. It was suggested that this approach could be explored further, including whether the Council could host such a system for Bransford. It would be worth engaging with WCC to request to be next on list. Cllr Sharp will follow up.

**Cotswold Play Area:** Covered above at public participation.

#### 10/26 Governance and policy review

To note and agree Delegation Scheme and Equality and Diversity Policy. The Council considered and RESOLVED to approve and adopt the Delegation Scheme and Equality and Diversity Policy.

#### 11/26 Planning

- a) To elect a chair of the planning committee. Cllr Christie proposed Cllr Fereday. Cllr Sharp seconded. All in favour. Cllr Fereday duly elected to Chair the Planning Committee for 2026/27.

- b) To confirm membership of the planning committee. It was agreed all members of the Parish Council should be members of the planning committee.
- c) To consider and approve the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2026. Having been circulated the minutes were approved and signed.
- d) Updates on ongoing planning matters. None.
- e) Planning applications for consideration.

| MHDC Reference                                                                                     | Location                                                   | Proposal                                                                     | Recommendation                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| M/26/00301/FUL                                                                                     | Caro Burberry Sculpture Studio Bransford Worcester WR6 5JN | Amended description and additional information in the form of a noise report | The Council considered the application and <b>RESOLVED to object</b> to the proposal. (Objection proposed Cllr Christie, seconded Cllr Bayston. All in favour). Comments below. |
| (M/25/01893/FUL The Low Barn Dingle Road Leigh Worcester WR6 5JX. Notification of Planning Appeal) |                                                            |                                                                              | Noted: no further comment.                                                                                                                                                      |

The Council considered planning application M/26/00301/FUL and **RESOLVED to object** on the following grounds:

The proposed 'Bike and Brew' café is likely to give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance, arising from frequent motorcycle arrivals and departures, increased general visitor activity, and a corresponding rise in vehicle movements, particularly during early morning and late afternoon peak periods. Concerns were raised regarding the impact of the proposal on parking, highway safety, and the PROW. The site is likely to result in parking overspill onto the shared access, leading to obstruction of the PROW and unsafe manoeuvring, particularly in proximity to the A4103 junction. This intensification of use would increase the risk of collisions, sudden braking, and turning movements, posing a danger to residents who rely on the same access. Furthermore, the shared nature of the route would give rise to conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, resulting in safety risks as well as noise and disturbance for users of the PROW along what is a narrow and constrained access.

Item 17 b/f: CIL update: Chair confirmed receipt of CIL money on 28/4 of £28,997, with the total now at £109,796. As minuted previously we still have the 2/1 split between Scouts and Leigh Church. As soon as they're both ready the respective monies will be issued.

- g) To note planning decisions received.

M/26/00220/HP. Cherry Tree Cottage, 3 Suffield, Bransford: Extension of dropped kerb. **Approved.** Noted.

M/26/00462/HP. 6 Suffield, Bransford. Construction of 1800mm fence. **Refused.** Noted.

## 12/26 Grants and Donations

- a) South Worcestershire Citizens Advice (SWCA) - £250.
- b) Leigh Church - £1,500.
- c) Sphere – £25.00

Cllr Sharp noted that the above three items should have been paid at the end of March. The Clerk confirmed they have been noted for the March 2027 agenda.

Cllr Sharp proposed payment of all three items, which was seconded by Cllr Christie. All in favour.

### 13/26 Finance

- a) To review and approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26. Having been previously circulated, it was RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26 be approved. The document was duly signed.
- b) To review and approve the Annual Accounting Statement for 2025/26. Having been previously circulated, it was RESOLVED that the Annual Accounting Statement for 2025/26 be approved. The document was duly signed.
- c) To confirm existing signatories for cheques and online banking. It was RESOLVED to confirm the current signatories as follows: Cheques – Cllrs Fereday and Sharp; Online banking – Cllrs Fereday, Sharp and Bayston.
- d) To note and/or review the inventory of land and assets. After confirmation the new defibrillator and unit had been added the asset register was and duly signed. Cllr Sharp also confirmed that the defibrillator was now up and running at Bank Farm and gave thanks to the Harcombes for hosting the unit on their barn. Cllr Sharp did raise the possibility of having a sign pointing to the defibrillator but this probably won't happen. He did however confirm it was illuminated at night. He said another one is being placed (privately owned) along the Dingle Road. The Clerk also confirmed our grant application has been successful and will be getting one, although we're not sure when.
- e) To note and/or review the risk assessment plan and insurance cover for 2026/27. The risk assessment plan and insurance arrangements were noted. It was agreed that Cllr Bayston would review the policy and report back to the Council. It was further RESOLVED that the Council would remain with Zurich Insurance for the 2026/27 period as we're 'locked in' until 2028.
- f) To appoint a Parish Council Member auditor. Cllr Cresswell was nominated, and it was unanimously RESOLVED that Cllr Cresswell be appointed as Parish Council Member auditor.
- g) To approve schedule of accounts payable. To approve the schedule of accounts payable. The payment were noted, and it was RESOLVED that the schedule of accounts payable be approved.

#### **Schedule of Accounts for Parish Council Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

|                                  |                                    | £         |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| A Briggs                         | Clerk's Pay (March)                | 904.97    |
| NEST                             | Clerk's pension                    | 68.79     |
| L Griffiths                      | Gardener – Jubilee Gardens (March) | 49.50     |
| L&B Memorial Hall                | Room rent payment (Jan to March)   | 97.80     |
| CALC/NALC                        | Annual Subscription                | 1,392.06  |
| L Griffiths                      | Gardener – Jubilee Gardens (April) | 49.50     |
| A Briggs                         | Clerk's pay (April)                | 1,018.15  |
| Duffy Regan & Co                 | AGAR – Internal audit fee 25/26    | 60.00     |
| SSLC                             | Annual subscription                | 200.00    |
| Transfer from current to savings |                                    | 30,000.00 |
| (Zurich)                         | Annual insurance                   | 888.55    |

Balance as at: 24<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Community Current Account: £15,472.90

Business Premium Savings Account: £144,196.53

14/26 To nominate councillor representatives as follows:

- a) New-build Developments – Cllr Chandler
- b) Memorial Hall Committee – Cllr Bayston
- c) Play areas – Cllr Christie
- d) Open Spaces – Cllr Sharp
- e) Lengthsman scheme – Cllrs Sharp and Brazier
- f) Parish Footpaths - Cllr Christie \*
- g) Road safety and VAS/SID – Cllr Chandler
- h) Worcestershire CALC meetings – Cllr Bayston

\* It was agreed that Cllr Christie would keep a check on Rectory Wood and report any issues.

15/26 To review the council's and clerk's memberships of other bodies. CALC AND SLCC. The two Memberships were noted and approved.

16/26 Updates on:

- a) Parking issue Kiln Lane: Now closed.
- b) Pathway Haywood Drive: Update to be given from Cllr McSweeney at July's PC Meeting.
- c) Potters Reach Phase 2: As above.
- d) Stocks Lane speeding: Clerk confirmed that our Police Community Support Officer is looking into this issue. A conversation also followed concerning parked cars around the school at drop off/pick up times. Parking should be available once the hardstanding area is surplus to requirement on the Lioncourt site. A pedestrian crossing is also being built by the school.
- e) Guinness Park Farm Regulatory enquiry: The Chair updated the Parish Council, noting that another complaint was received on 25<sup>th</sup> May and circulated, along with Cllr McSweeney's response. There is little further to report. It was noted that conditions may have improved, as mud and dirt levels appear reduced. A few minor issues may still need attention, but there is definitely no odour as was reported. It was suggested that if Cllr McSweeney wanted to look around the site he would be made welcome. ACTION: Clerk to pass contact name to Cllr McSweeney. Update to be given from Cllr McSweeney at July's meeting.

Cllr Bayston informed the PC that the problem ditch which causes flooding in Chapel Lane has been identified. A discussion took place around this with Cllr Sharp confirming that the South Worcestershire Drainage team to meet with the Lengthsman to pin point the issue. As a first port of call Cllr Sharp to speak to SWD and Lengthsman.

17/26 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

- a) Scout Hut - The Big Build
- b) WC and kitchenette in Leigh Church

Both items discussed above at planning.

18/26 Any other reports and items for future consideration. The Chair asked about the white gates which the Lengthsman was meant to clean. Cllr Sharp to speak to Lengthsman.

19/26 To set dates and locations of Parish Council meetings for 2026/27 Noted.

All meetings 7pm at Leigh & Bransford Memorial Hall

Meeting closed at: 8.33PM

Chair.....

Date .....

#### Reports from WCC and MHDC:

The main news at Worcestershire County Council comes from the annual council meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Paul Bennett (councillor for Malvern Langland) was elected Chair of the council for the coming year. That is the simple news!

The other thing arising was a change to the leadership of the council – the complications of which made national news! Following elections in May 2025, Cllr Jo Monk from the Reform group was elected leader of the council, heading a group of 27 councillors as a minority administration. By the time I last spoke to you they had been reduced to 25. Shortly after that, on 17<sup>th</sup> April, the Reform group elected Cllr Alan Amos as their new leader, replacing Cllr Jo Monk by a margin of 15 to 10, showing the split within their own group. Cllr Amos was expected to become Leader of the council at the May meeting, but instead a coalition was formed from Greens, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats and Independents, and Matt Jenkins from the Green party was elected Leader of the council. Given the turmoil of the last year this was an attempt to put experienced and competent councillors across all parties into positions of power and take joint responsibility for running the council well for the benefit of the residents of Worcestershire. Unfortunately, less than an hour after the conclusion of the meeting, the national Conservative party suspended the leader of the Conservative group, Adam Kent, claiming that he hadn't been authorised to form this coalition. This, and his relationship with the Conservative party is currently subject to legal action, so I can't comment further on that, but he remains Deputy Leader of the council. Three other members of the Conservative group did step down as cabinet members under orders from their national party, being replaced by other coalition members. We currently have a cabinet consisting of Greens, Liberal Democrats and Independents as follows:

- Leader and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Local Government Reorganisation, Transformation and Government Lobbying - Councillor Matt Jenkins
- Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance, Corporate Services and Business - Councillor Adam Kent
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care - Councillor Mel Allcott
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families - Councillor Natalie McVey
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment and Communities - Councillor Josh Robinson
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education, SEND and Skills - Councillor Dan Boatright-Greene
- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Wellbeing - Councillor Alan Bailes

- Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport - Councillor Tom Wells

This is currently a minority coalition, but I hope we will be able to continue with the support of some other councillors.

Personally, I am now Chair of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which Highways reports to. This doesn't give me any control over policy, but I can ask Highways to report to my panel and justify strategic decisions – I also hope to work constructively with the new Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Tom Wells.

Locally, I have requested a footway along the A4103 to Haywood Drive, but have been told that one hasn't been put in place as the verge is too narrow there – I intend to pursue this further, but it may require modification to the carriageway. The County Council is not willing to do anything to resolve the parking issues on Kiln Lane as it is a minor residential road – policy is not to undertake engineering work on such roads to solve parking problems – I am in contact with the residents involved. I have authorisation for bollards to prevent pavement parking opposite Clewer Croft, but no date yet for the work. A few other minor works in progress or planned which I am chasing up. Finally, I am now also your District Councillor, but nothing to report from that, having not yet officially taken up my position. I hope to be able to provide support and updates across both councils in the future.

(Cllr McSweeney)

### **South Worcestershire Development Plan – The Next Phase**

With the ink only just drying on the recently adopted South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), work has already begun on the next Local Plan review. The Government is now requiring local plans to be produced far more quickly than in previous years, with councils expected to move through the process at a significantly accelerated pace.

Under the new national housing targets, the Malvern Hills area is expected to deliver approximately 250 additional homes per year above the numbers that have only just been agreed through the current SWDP process. This represents a substantial increase in housing expectations across the district.

At this stage, there is no clarity regarding which sites may be proposed to meet these new housing figures. Many sites previously considered during both the first and second SWDP processes were rejected following extensive local consultation and examination. However, over the next two years communities are likely to begin seeing renewed pressure for development proposals.

It is anticipated that settlements such as Leigh Sinton, Bransford and Rushwick may continue to experience significant development pressure due to their location and existing infrastructure links, whilst many smaller rural villages may see less direct impact. Nevertheless, this raises ongoing concerns about the continued imbalance between market housing growth and the genuine affordable housing needs of local rural residents.

It is important to note that whilst a Parish Plan is a good local tool for a Parish Council to determine local community priorities it does not hold any weight as a statutory planning tool .

### **Affordable Housing and Rural Exception Sites**

One of the continuing challenges across rural communities is the lack of genuinely affordable housing for local people, particularly younger residents and families wishing to remain within their communities. So for those areas unlikely to see development via the SWDP this maybe an option to consider.

Some areas of the country, including Devon, have seen Parish and District Councils take a more proactive role in identifying locally supported Rural Exception Sites. These are small-scale developments specifically intended to meet local affordable housing needs and are often supported where they remain sensitive to village character and infrastructure.

There may be value in exploring whether similar locally-led approaches could help address affordable housing pressures within our own rural communities whilst allowing greater local influence over site selection and scale.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs)**

Parish Councils may also wish to consider the future role of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). Having an adopted NDP in place can still provide important local planning policies, including:

- Protection of valued green spaces
- Design and character guidance
- Local infrastructure priorities
- Environmental protections
- Community-led development policies

However, it is important to recognise that recent changes to Government planning policy mean that NDPs no longer provide the same level of protection against development on sites formally allocated through the Local Plan process. If a site is ultimately allocated within the SWDP, the ability for an NDP to resist development is now significantly reduced.

Despite this, NDPs remain an important tool in helping communities shape development rather than simply react to it.

### **Current SWDP Timetable**

The following draft timetable has been submitted to Government and the Planning Inspectorate:

|                                                    |                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Decision</b>                                    | <b>Timeline</b>             |
| Finalisation of Plan Making publication            | June 2026                   |
| Public Consultation                                | September – 30 October 2026 |
| Publication of Gateway 1 self-assessment           | October 2026                |
| Consultation on proposed plan content and evidence | December 2026               |
| Gateway 2 request                                  | January 2027                |
| Consultation on proposed plan                      | February 2027               |
| Gateway 3 request                                  | March 2027                  |
| Submission for examination                         | April 2027                  |
| Proposed adoption                                  | May/June 2027               |

Parish Councils are encouraged to engage early in the process as the shortened timetable is likely to reduce opportunities for later amendments.

### **Malvern Hills District Council Grants and Funding Opportunities**

Parish Councils, community organisations and local voluntary groups are reminded that a range of grants and funding opportunities continue to be available through [Malvern Hills District Council](#).

Current and emerging funding opportunities typically include:

- Community infrastructure and capital grants
- Environmental and biodiversity funding
- Youth and wellbeing project support
- Community resilience and cost of living support
- Arts, culture and heritage grants
- Sports and recreation funding
- Rural community initiatives
- Small grants for local events and projects

Groups are encouraged to regularly monitor the council website as additional Government-backed schemes and rural funding opportunities are announced throughout the year.

### **Ward Member Community Funding Update**

I am also pleased to confirm that my annual ward budget has now increased to £5,000 per year, allowing additional support for local community organisations and projects across the ward.

In just the first month since the fund opened, funding and support has already included:

- Support for Alfrick Cricket Club with the purchase of new cricket balls
- Funding assistance for Suckley Festival traffic safety equipment
- Support towards the new poppy wall installation at Leigh Church
- Offer of funding for a new bench at Suckley Playing Fields
- Funding for two community Christmas carol gatherings, including chocolates for local children
- Ongoing discussions with Alfrick Memorial Hall regarding future funding support
- Discussions with EDDY who provide supported swimming sessions for individuals experiencing mental health challenges at Escape to the Lakes

I continue to welcome applications from local organisations, community groups and parish councils for projects that support community wellbeing, local facilities, safety, recreation and inclusion.

As ever any questions or if you need me to do anything just get in touch  
(Cllr Rouse).