

LEIGH AND BRANSFORD PARISH COUNCIL
www.leighandbransfordparishcouncil.gov.uk

Minutes of a meeting of Leigh and Bransford Parish Council held at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 22nd September 2026 at Leigh & Bransford Memorial Hall

Present: Cllrs D Fereday, N Cresswell, L Bayston, J Sharp, J Bond

Clerk: Anna Briggs. 0 members of public.

35/26 Apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Cllrs N Christie, P Hawkins, P Ralph and J Brazier.

36/26 Applications for co-option. An application from a resident was considered and, all being in favour, **RESOLVED:** to approve the application. Jennie Bond signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and was welcomed to the Council.

37/26 a) Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Disclosable Interests. None.
b) Register of Interests. Councillors were reminded of the requirement to submit their Register of Interests. No matters were raised.
c) Requests for dispensations under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011. None received.

38/26 Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

39/26 Police Drop-in – PC Molly-Ann Smith, West Mercia Police. PC Smith presented her report, which appears after the minutes. The Rural Safety Neighbourhood Team currently comprises PC Smith and PC Stanley, with a third CSO hopefully joining in September. The parish priorities are speeding, cold calling and rural crime. Foot patrols are to be introduced as the evenings become darker. The location of the speed enforcement officer, currently mainly near the Royal Oak, was discussed; PC Smith said locations can be moved following assessment. She will also undertake foot patrols near the school due to parking issues.

The Council discussed speeding on the A4103. Cllr Sharp gave the September VAS figures for vehicles exceeding 33mph, travelling from Malvern into Leigh Sinton:

6th September – 4,500

13th September – 5,000

20th September – 7,500

Speed signage on this stretch was discussed; PC Smith confirmed that the police have no jurisdiction over speed limits. Cllr Bond reported that a speed sign by the phone box/library had been vandalised and will send an image to Cllr McSweeney. Cllr Sharp reported an elderly lady being targeted by phone fraudsters. PC Smith agreed to provide wording on cold calling. **ACTION:** On receipt, Clerk to download, display and pass to Facebook, Sphere and WI. PC Smith has cold caller stickers available for distribution.

In Cllr Christie's absence, the Chair read his communication; included at the end of the minutes. He also reported a positive reaction to the Council's communication to the MP/WCC requesting a meeting on highways matters. **ACTION:** Clerk to chase Cllr Wells if no response by end of week. In response to Cllr Christie's comments, PC Smith said the small team cannot be present all the time because of the size of the area covered, but many residents appreciate the police presence. The speed camera requires a straight road to operate effectively and officers must wear hi-vis for safety. It was noted that the speed enforcement officer opposite the Royal Oak does not appear to wear hi-vis, nor does the bike. PC Smith will enquire. She also noted that many people use Waze and receive alerts.

40/26 Reports of District and County Councillors. Neither councillor was present. It was noted that Cllr McSweeney has a District commitment on the 4th Tuesday of the month. The Chair referred to Cllr Rouse's report, particularly the latest LGR position, which remains unclear. Cllr Rouse's report appears at the end of the minutes.

41/26 Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 28th July and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 25th August 2026. **RESOLVED:** to approve the Parish Council minutes unanimously. They were signed by the Chair.

42/26 Progress reports on matters from the previous meeting not otherwise included on the agenda. **Community Hub:** The Chair confirmed he had written to David Harrison and attended the North Planning Committee meeting. No formal response to his letter was received apart from a holding email. Planning has now gone through; the Council's objective throughout was to highlight the lack of public consultation. Overall, £3.4M is being spent on a very good facility for the community. **Bransford Acre:** In response to Cllr Sharp's earlier question, members discussed whether a property understood to have received a self-build CIL exemption is now being let. If confirmed, and if the letting began within three years of completion, this may affect the exemption. **ACTION:** Clerk to refer the concern to MHDC's CIL team for assessment. **White Gates:** The Lengthsman has cleaned these. **Rectory Wood:** Cllr Christie asked when the next tree inspection is due. **ACTION:** Clerk to confirm.

43/26 Planning

- a) Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 25th August 2026 and the Extraordinary Meeting also held on 25th August 2026, having been circulated, **RESOLVED: to approve the circulated minutes, which were signed.**
- b) Updates on ongoing planning matters. There were none.
- c) Planning applications for consideration

MHDC Reference	Location	Proposal	Recommendation
M/26/01238/HP Associated Ref:M/26/01239/LB	The Byre Stocks Lane Leigh Sinton Malvern WR13 5DY	Installation of PV panels to South-facing roof slope	Cllr Sharp proposed, Cllr Bayston seconded. All in favour.
M/26/01167/HP	9 Lynn Close Leigh Sinton Malvern WR13 5DU	Addition of dormer on front elevation.	No Comment. All in favour.

(CIL update: The Chair displayed a table showing the current CIL position: £106,000 held, with £71K earmarked for the Scouts and £32K for the Church. To be discussed further at minute 47/26).

- d) Planning decisions received. M/26/00885/FUL: Land At (Os 7833 5108), Leigh Sinton – proposed community centre, car parking and public space including 3 grass football pitches, MUGA, outdoor gym and attenuation pond – **Approved**. Noted. M/25/01301/ADV: Fox Inn, Bransford – installation of sign – **Approved**. Noted.

44/26 Finance

- a) Schedule of accounts payable. The payments were noted. **RESOLVED:** to approve the schedule of accounts payable unanimously.

Schedule of Accounts - Parish Council meeting, 22nd September 2026

		£
NEST	Pension – payment for July	68.79
L Griffiths	Gardener – Jubilee Gardens (July)	49.50
Lengthsman	Hours April to June	1080.00
L Griffiths	Gardener – Jubilee Gardens (August)	49.50
Pinnacle Hosting	Annual Hosting Fee	300.00
Anna Briggs	Clerk – payment for August	905.77
NEST	Pension – payment for August	68.79
Pinnacle Hosting	'Blacklist' annual protection	33.00
PKF Littlejohn	External Auditor	504.00*
Lengthsman Hours	Hours July-August	504.00*

**yet to be processed.*

Balance as at: 20th September 2026

Community Current Account: £6,578.27
Business Premium Savings Account: £145,816.91

- b) Internal Audit Plan 2025-26. C/F to November's meeting.
- c) To consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor 2026–27. The Clerk led a discussion on changing auditor, suggesting we use someone with governance experience from the suggested CALC approved list. **RESOLVED:** to appoint Ann Dobbins as Internal Auditor for 2026–27. Proposed by Cllr Bayston, seconded by Cllr Cresswell; all in favour. **ACTION:** Clerk to instruct Ann Dobbins.
- d) To note and minute two payments to Pinnacle Hosting (web glitch - £50.00 and blacklist protection £33.00). Noted and all in favour. Cllr Sharp noted that the website should be backed up, as the IT consultant had to rebuild it. **ACTION:** Clerk to check the backup arrangements with IT consultant.

45/26 To consider hosting a showing of the Invitation to People's Emergency Briefing. Following brief discussion, and as the film is not Government-backed, **RESOLVED: that the Parish Council should not show the film.**

46/26 Updates

- a) Haywood Drive pathway/footway alongside the A4103. No update from Cllr McSweeney.
- b) Potters Reach Phase 2. No update.
- c) A4103 speeding, including enquiry from resident dated 31/7/26. This was discussed at length earlier. The Clerk brought to the Council's attention an email received at the end of July from a resident on Suckley Road concerning speeding. **ACTION:** Clerk to contact the resident with brief update. Community Speed Watch, being championed by Cllr Christie, was also discussed. 5 interested residents have been identified - a minimum of six are required. More volunteers would be welcome. Facebook has limitations; word of mouth, the school and PTA may assist recruitment. **ACTION:** Cllr Christie to follow up and update at the next meeting.
- d) Community Hub. As discussed earlier; the Council reiterated that there has been no proper discussion with the community/Parish Council.
- e) Worcestershire Local Government Reorganisation. No further developments due for some time.

47/26 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Chair has received communications from the Church Treasurer and Scouts asking when CIL funding may be released. A detailed discussion took place on when the money should be released and what safety/protection measures should be in place from the Parish Council's perspective. **ACTION:** Chair to speak to WCALC and report back to the Council.

48/26 Reports from working groups and representatives

- a) New-build developments: Cllr Chandler - No update.
- b) Memorial Hall Committee: Cllr Bayston - A request for the PC to help fund the hall fire system was received; Cllr Bayston was unsure whether this had been discussed at the last Memorial Hall Committee meeting. The curtains were discussed, including whether they were fire retardant. The new Hub and possible effect on Memorial Hall footfall were also discussed. Cllr Bayston and Phauline will clear the store room.
- c) Play areas: Cllr Christie – nothing to report.
- d) Open spaces – nothing to report.
- e) Lengthsman Scheme: Cllrs Sharp and Brazier. Cllr Sharp has asked the Lengthsman to trim around the letter box by the bridge in Leigh, which will need to be regular occurrence. Grass may also need cutting around the Dingle Road entrance. Rectory Wood has been trimmed. The Council again noted the high standard of the Community Garden maintained by Lisa, with many positive comments!
- f) Parish footpaths: A complaint was made about footpath 705B being ploughed and Cllr Sharp reported it. There had also been a problem with the potato field near the hall; the farmer has corrected this and the route is now walkable.
- g) Road safety and VAS/SID: Cllr Sharp reported a road closure from 28-30th September from Suckley to Bransford, for which the Council had received no notification. There is also confusion over closures and reopening on Knightwick Road, Alfrick. Headway signs have been left lying on the verge. **ACTION:** Cllr Sharp to raise with Cllr McSweeney.
- h) Worcestershire CALC: Cllr Bayston – no update. **ACTION:** Clerk to find out when the next meeting is.

49/26 Items for future consideration. Cllr Sharp said a site is still being sought for the mobile mast. Community land was again mentioned as a possible location. **ACTION:** Cllr Sharp to look at this matter again.

50/26 Dates of next meetings:

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on 24th November and the Planning Committee meeting on 27th October. All meetings commence at 7.00 pm at Leigh & Bransford Memorial Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.00PM

Chair.....

Date

Appendix: Reports from PC Molly-Ann Smith, West Mercia Police, Cllr Christie's report to PC Molly-Ann Smith and report from Cllr Rouse, MHDC

Leigh and Bransford parish report **Incidents from April to September 2026**

RTC – 2

Animal related – 3

Criminal damage – 1

Highways incident – 3

Assault – 1

Suspicious circumstances – 2

Robbery – 1

Public order – 2

Burglary residential – 2

The Kempsey and Alfrick team consist of PC Stanley and PC Smith.

The main priorities in Leigh and Bransford would be speeding, cold calling and rural crime.

We patrol Leigh and Bransford mostly by car however we will be booking in some time to conduct foot patrols through the villages and near the school.

We have completed speed enforcement on Suckley road and have had motorbike police checking speed on the A4103 over the last year.

We urge members of the public to not open their door if they are unsure who is to prevent cold callers.

We have had one burglary in Bransford over the last five months however have competed reassurance and CCTV enquires and increased patrols in certain areas when crime increases.

We urge members of the public to report to the police either 101/report or in an emergency 999 this is for us to be able to know what is going on in certain areas this also helps us decide our patrols as we target areas with an increase in reports.

ka.snt@westmercia.police.uk

Cllr Christie's report put to PC Smith: I was dismayed at the Police's published comments on social media at the time of the diversion, where they noted that upon checks by the police, drivers were adhering to the speed limits. They failed to say that this check was carried out with officers in high viz jackets on a straight stretch of road and for a short period of time. Such comments by the police are at best disingenuous, giving a false impression to members of the public that there is not a problem with speeding - when residents know that is not the case!

Local Government Reorganisation – what happens next?

The Government's decision to pause and review Local Government Reorganisation has changed the position considerably. Following my work with local government at a national level, my view is that this

pause is about more than simply putting the timetable on hold. There is now a much greater focus on **devolution and “rewiring the state”**, and I believe ministers are taking the opportunity to look again at whether the boundaries and structures proposed for new councils actually fit that wider vision.

There are also questions about whether some of the decisions taken during the previous process fully comply with the principles and criteria set out by ministers at the beginning of the process. The Government has now withdrawn decisions in four areas and placed the other decisions, apart from Surrey, under review following updated legal advice.

Surrey is continuing, with its two new unitary councils due to take over in April 2027. It is the only area whose decision has been expressly excluded from the current review. Surrey was considerably further advanced than other areas, with elections to the new councils already held and legislation establishing the new authorities already in place.

The County Councils Network has also campaigned strongly on the future structure of local government and the pace and approach to reorganisation. Ultimately, however, I think the bigger question is what the Government now wants local government to look like as part of its wider programme of devolution and reform.

When Angela Rayner and Jim McMahon first set out the principles for this process, there was a clear vision for changing the way the state operates and moving power closer to communities. The current pause gives ministers the opportunity to reconsider whether the structures proposed actually deliver that vision.

For Worcestershire, I therefore think **One Worcestershire is now a much more credible possibility than it appeared only a few weeks ago**. That was one of the original proposals submitted to Government and would create a single council covering the whole county. The alternative was the two-unitary model, with North and South Worcestershire councils.

Whether that ultimately happens is, of course, anyone's guess. As we have discovered over the last year, local government reorganisation is capable of changing direction remarkably quickly!

Leigh Sinton Community Sports Facility

Planning permission has now been granted for the Leigh Sinton Community Sports facility. The proposal includes a new community centre, public open space, **three grass football pitches, a multi-use games area, outdoor gym and associated infrastructure**. The application was approved on 9 September 2026.

This is not an isolated approach to community facilities. MHDC already owns and invests in a substantial network of community and leisure assets and works with local organisations and specialist operators to make them available to residents.

For example:

- **Upton Hill Centre** – a community facility owned by MHDC and operated on the Council's behalf by Freedom Leisure. It provides a range of community, leisure and wellbeing activities.
- **Malvern Vale Community Centre** – owned by MHDC, with day-to-day management, operation, repairs and maintenance contracted to Freedom Leisure. The original £800,000 development was funded through Section 106 contributions from the Persimmon Homes development. In 2026 MHDC has also invested more than £500,000 in improvements to the building.
- **Malvern Splash** – a major district leisure facility operated by Freedom Leisure on behalf of MHDC. The Council has previously invested £2 million in its redevelopment and continues to regard leisure provision as an important part of its health and wellbeing offer.
- **Malvern Town Football Club** – MHDC owns the facility and has invested significantly in improving it. More than £425,000 was invested in the club's car parking and access improvements, as part of the Council's Community Infrastructure Investment Plan.
- **Sling Lane football fields** – these form part of the district's wider network of playing pitches and open spaces. MHDC purchased the site in 1999 and has subsequently invested around **£500,000** in the facility.

Indeed, MHDC's Community Infrastructure Investment Plan commits up to **£4 million** to improving community facilities and open spaces across the district. The Council says it already has a network of more than 150 open spaces and community sites and that, since 2020, it has invested more than £4.4 million in its own facilities, alongside a further £4.1 million in community-owned provision through Section 106 funding.

Leigh Sinton should therefore be seen in that wider context. The new facility will provide an important community asset for residents, including sports pitches, community space and outdoor recreation but will also benefit the wider area and the £3.4 million investment recognises this .

Cllr Sarah Rouse

DRAFT