

# LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

## MINUTES

To be held at Leigh Village Hall  
on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 7 p.m.

1. **Apologies** –DCllr Penfold for being late.
2. **Welcome by Chairman of Leigh Parish Council** – Cllr Scutt welcomed those present.
3. **To receive Minutes of previous Meeting** – minutes were agreed. Cllr Bennett was not present but appreciated them as a record of what had been achieved during the year.
4. **Report by Chairman of Leigh Parish Council**

Cllr Scutt reported: - First of all I would like to thank my fellow Councillors who have contributed towards the many activities and work of the Parish Council this past year. Diana West joined the Parish Council, in November, and I hope she will continue to enjoy both her time and the work to which she can now contribute.

There are, of course, many others who provide valuable assistance to the Parish Council. Trevor Evans, who with Dorset County Council, help to keep our footpaths in order – he must walk hundreds of miles in a year, together with his trusty dog, Gemma.

Our WDDC, Mary Penfold and CC Michael Bevan have provided valuable assistance and funds to enable us to work efficiently and effectively.

Last year I reported that gates were to be sited in place of some stiles. The funds came from Cllr Bevan's access to finance and from the Parish Council. Since they have been in place there has been positive feedback from villagers not previously able to climb stiles. As a result the Parish Council has voted to continue with this work and each year, with landowner's permission, we will replace stiles with self-closing gates where it is practical. This will be a slow process, since the cost may well fall to the Parish Council.

A planning enquiry regarding Siever's Lane eventually resulted in the whole lane being regarded as a Public Bridleway rather than part being a BOAT a byway open to all traffic. This was a good result as far as the local residents were concerned.

Whilst the Speedwatch scheme has not been progressed, it is still on the Parish council agenda, should a person to progress the scheme come forward.

I would like to thank Jack Patterson for continuing to keep our web site up to date. This will become increasingly important in years to come, with the County and District Council's services and information moving to on-line activity. The Parish Council will be adding a new heading for the work of the Neighbourhood Plan, which is an activity that will take up much more time over the next year or more. There is a weekly list from Jack of what's on in Leigh and surrounding villages, so I urge people who may have access to the internet to subscribe to this – it is free – so they can both add their functions and support the many activities that are on in our area.

The numerous emails and circulars from Dorset County Council and West Dorset District Council, Police, Health and Housing indicate how many trees we are saving. Most do not need responses, but it is interesting to highlight how much change and work is going on in areas of our life. A current topic is that of Public Libraries. There are villages who are concerned at the possible removal of the mobile library. Most are elderly and do not access the internet. It is these very people who we must look out for, as they miss out on much information and we must look at ways in which these residents can be kept up to date with all activities.

On saving trees, it must be noted that the Parish Council, on behalf of local residents are planting an English Oak tree here in the meadow behind the hall on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, to celebrate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. A circular walk from here is also to be marked for the occasion, when new gates are installed.

Many of the activities and clubs of our village would not take place without the work of the many volunteers who give of their time and commitment. I would like to thank those people for giving of their time so generously and adding value to our lovely village. I would like to point out that many volunteers and residents are now getting on in years and we would like to appeal to younger people to get involved and I mean anyone under the age of 70 – but including those from teenage years up, who are able to use their skills, or acquire new ones in some volunteering capacity in the village.

There is a prospect of the Parish Council purchasing some land next to the village hall for the use of a Village Community Facility/Recreation Ground. Such an acquisition will be preserved for generations to come and we have considered this a worthwhile scheme. It is currently in the early stages of negotiation, where we are investigating lines of funding for purchase. Should the purchase take place, then it will be for the Parish Council to maintain the upkeep of such a facility, falling upon the Precept within the annual council tax.

During this past year, we have decided to have a couple of people to take a closer look at our Parish Council finances, where we could make savings, and advise the full council about affordability of projects. The Parish Council are not only having to take on more responsibility, such as the Service Level Agreement for the extra cutting of hedges bordering on footpaths, audit costs and data protection, but we are also looking at schemes that would benefit the village and its residents, such as gates instead of stiles, where suitable. However, the only access to funds is through the annual precept on the council tax bill we all pay, and we would wish to keep this to a minimum, so some projects will take longer than they might otherwise. On the other hand, savings through shopping around for insurance has been achieved.

Finally, we rely on the excellent work of our clerk, Carinna Vickers, who keeps us all in order and manages the volume of circulars, meeting agendas, meetings and enquiries. Without this organisation behind us, we would flounder, so thank you.

#### 5. **Reports by elected representatives**

Cllr Smith reported as representative of **Boyles Trust**. The Trust had distributed funds of over £4,000 to 14 applicants (3 from Leigh) who were going onto further education. Mrs Judy Gallimore has now become the Trusts Secretary. Cllr Smith was learning the criteria for applicants but each application was viewed independently. He hopes to make the publication of the Trusts finances and distribution more open by better advertising for applicants. There was no website for the Trust but maybe links on the Leigh Parish Council would be useful.

Cllr Stillitano reported that the **Welcome Pack** since March 2015, had distributed 16 packs to houses / new residents and 8 copies were distributed on fresher's day. Cost paid out were in the region of £6. They were looking for volunteers to edit and put in any changes. The packs were given to the neighbours of people moving in.

**Play Park** Report from Mel Shine read by Cllr Scutt. "It has been a busy year so far and we have 3 new faces on the Playpark committee which has rejuvenated the proposed Playpark move. I joined in January as Chairperson and the committee is made up of mainly parents of young children with a few wise heads thrown in for balance! There are currently over 40 children under 11 years old in Leigh, so the need for a Play park is growing.

As you may well know, the lease for the current Play park is up in 2020 and we have been trying to move it to land at the Village Hall for quite a while. We are extremely grateful that Sandra arranged a meeting on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March between all the interested parties and that such a constructive and enterprising group have been formed. We are very much looking forward to moving ahead with the land purchase and working with everyone to create a wonderful Village Green for all to enjoy. We have some great ideas for all age groups for what we want to use the land for, but this will obviously require funding and time. We currently have about £2,000 and are actively fundraising with some success. There are grants available but until we formally have the land purchased we cannot apply for any grants.

If anyone would be interested in joining the committee or have ideas for fundraising, even mow the grass, you will be very welcome!

**Tuesday Club** report from P Castleman - "The Tuesday Club's programme for 2015 produced some excellent speakers both from Leigh itself, where we are based, and further afield. They ranged from Rural Crafts and Walking The Great Wall of China to The Songs of Dorset. There was also a very enjoyable conducted tour of the Bishop's Palace Gardens at Wells, followed by an afternoon spent in this delightful city – the smallest in the country. The year finished with our popular Carol Service, led by the Rev. Tony and Margaret Durkin.

At our AGM in January 2016, the thorny problems of falling membership numbers was once again discussed. Members have either moved away from the village or sadly died, and although we had hoped that the Fresher's Day would prove productive, unfortunately this did not result in any new members.

The Tuesday Club is open to everyone, 50-PLUS and over, but perhaps due to its afternoon slot, it does seem to be looked upon more as a "Derby and Joan" group. Unfortunately, therefore, unless membership increases considerably the club will not be in a position to continue beyond 2017. It is not practical or reasonable to increase the subscription and it is also discourteous to ask speakers to speak to a very small group.

Our 2016 programme is varied and interesting – just as it has always been – so we can only wait and see what the Summer may bring!

**Leigh WI Report 2016.** - received after the meeting but attached to minutes for information. At 7.30pm on the last Tuesday of each month, ladies from the surrounding villages meet for a social evening at Leigh Village Hall. A varied programme is put together by a hard-working committee to try and cater for all tastes; anything from Belly Dancing, Birds of Prey, Cheese Tasting, Charities, Fashion, Music the list is endless and any suggestions are welcomed. We also have an Outing in June and Christmas Party in December; are able to take part in numerous activities under the umbrella of Dorset Federation WI and attend the National Conference in Poole in October. Leigh WI also have a well attended Lunch Club, visiting local pubs and a Theatre group. It really offers a great opportunity to meet other ladies and have a chat over tea and biscuits.

**Footpaths Report May 2016 - Drove And Public** Enquiries. Report from Mr TD Evans. a) Longbridge Drove: A large sum of money was invested to make its surface passable for motorised traffic, for horse riders and for walkers. It is still used by motorcyclists and by 4x4's, but those who use it today however seem to be far more courteous. The surface has stood up well to the elements and to vehicular use. The Batcombe Road end is still causing problems however because of very poor drainage. The trouble is that the cost of improving the drainage would be exorbitant, and this would lead to even greater use and hence the need for even more investment.

b) Seivers Lane: The current status of Seivers Lane is a Public Bridleway. Largely as a result of the efforts of Mrs Tina Cook, who with help from a couple of helpers successfully challenged some of the findings of the public enquiry. The Inspector changed her mind and reclassified Seivers Lane as a Public Bridleway. I would personally like to thank Tina for the work she has done on behalf of the Landowners and ourselves. c) Bailey Drove: Situated in the SE of our parish, Bailey Drove has also been the subject of an enquiry. As far as I know it remains what it was.

**STILES AND GATES** - A year ago Michael Bevan the County Councillor offered us finance to replace some of our stiles with gates. This offer was welcomed by LPC - who also added finance of their own, the result being that 6 stiles have been replaced by gates. The programme is continuing and another 4 gates will soon be installed resulting in a 'stileless walk' from Miz Maze to the Village Hall in a semicircular route to the south of the village. I would like to thank Councillor Mr David Vincent, Mr Charles Read, Mr John Meaker and Mrs J Edwards for their very altruistic approach to this project. Already we have received some positive feedback from villagers who find that they don't have to climb stiles any more. Michael Bevan has recently resigned from DCC, I would like to thank him most sincerely for his support, I would also stress that those who use these footpaths made easier by the LPC have responsibilities to ensure that they respect the paths, cleaning up any dog mess, making sure that their dogs are kept under control at all times, and respecting any livestock using these fields. Walkers must remember that we are guests in the countryside, animals live there.

**MAINTENANCE** - DROW run a very efficient maintenance service, but they rely on FLO's such as myself to inform them of any problems. In Leigh I rely upon villagers to let me know if they come across difficulties such as fallen trees across footpaths, damaged stiles or gates. The protocol then is I locate the problem on the Dorset Explorer map, I photograph it and send a copy into Dorchester. It is then dealt with. I would compliment and thank the Senior Ranger Dave Ackerley for his help and encouragement. We work very well together. I would also like to thank those who constantly update me on the conditions of our footpaths, stiles, gates etc. They are a great help and make my job that much easier. I notice that the SLA's we have arranged with DROW have started, with the first cutting of the year, another cutting will be arranged in the autumn.

**THE FUTURE.** - While I would like to continue with the programme of gate installation, there are a number of potential difficulties. To the north of the village we have the Stanley Waterfall Way which was set up to remind ourselves of the work Stanley did for the village. It would be nice to convert all the stiles along this walk to gates, however there are problems. Unfortunately some of the landowners concerned are not as altruistic as those named above, in some cases there are disagreements on the actual route of the path, there are also some diversions to contend with due to permissive paths being set up, there are also difficulties relating to the ownership of land in some cases.

The gates that have been installed so far are within close proximity to the centre of the village. Those stiles still remaining link the village to the parish boundaries, while these footpaths are still used they are largely used by younger residents (comparatively speaking); we have to make a judgement, will there be added value to make an investment on these more distant stiles in terms of more usage if we replace them with gates? We also have to remember that County policy is to install gates rather than stiles so that no new stiles will be built, although existing stiles will be repaired when necessary.

**A FINAL THOUGHT** - I have suggested that the walk from Miz Maze to the Parish Hall should be dedicated to Annie Sinnott who tragically passed away recently. I would like to remind the LPC that we have set up a precedent in naming the Stanley Waterfall Way after Stanley Waterfall and the Wilde Path after Jack Wilde the artist. I strongly recommend that the new walk should be named The Annie Sinnott Walk to remind future generations exactly who we are referring to, and reminding them of the fine legacy she has left us.

6. **Question and answer session** – none received.