

The Minutes of the Meeting of Leeds Parish Council on Tuesday, 14th April 2026
at 7pm in the Leeds and Broomfield Village Hall

Councillor's present:

China
Fort
Razzell
Ingram

Also present:

Sherrie Babington – Parish Clerk
Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport – Spencer Dixon
Members of the Public

The meeting was chaired by Cllr China.

1. Apologies.

Members who cannot attend a meeting shall tender their apologies to the Parish Clerk prior to the meetings, under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the members present must decide whether the reason(s) for a member's absence shall be accepted.

The following apologies and reasons for absence were approved and accepted.

- Cllr Bernini – Work
- Cllr Springford – Work
- Cllr Greeff - Work

Apologies were also received from:

- KCC Councillor Linden Kemkaran
- MBC Councillor Gary Cooke

2. Declaration of Interests.

To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of officers.

No interests were declared.

To consider any Dispensation requests received by the Parish Clerk and not previously considered.

There were no dispensations to consider.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to all members.

These were proposed by Cllr China as a true record, seconded by Cllr Fort and agreed by all present. The minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman of the meeting.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising.

5. Public Comments and Observations.

Members of the public attended and gave updates in relation to the forthcoming village litter pick and the May Fair.

It was reported that the village litter pick would take place on Saturday, starting from the sports field at 10.00am. An update was given on arrangements for rubbish collection points, and it was noted that clarification would be needed regarding whether Maidstone Borough Council could collect from more than one location.

An update was also received on the May Fair. Leaflet distribution had now been completed, and posters were due to be displayed. It was reported that arrangements were progressing well and that the event planning was on track.

The Chairman thanked those present for their work in organising both events.

6. Highways Matters.

a. General Update:

Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport Spencer Dixon attended the meeting in place of the Kent County Councillor and gave an update on current highways matters.

A general update was provided on pothole repairs across Kent. It was reported that the winter period had caused a significant increase in pothole reports, rising from around 4,500 at the same time last year to approximately 11,000 this year.

It was explained that repairs would now accelerate as the weather improved and that Kent County Council was also seeking to take a more proactive approach to road maintenance, including identifying roads at risk of deterioration before they failed.

Members were advised that Kent County Council was introducing a pilot scheme to improve communication with parish councils in relation to street works. This would involve a direct email route to the relevant street works team so that parish councils could raise local concerns more quickly, particularly where diversions or traffic management arrangements were unsuitable.

Members raised ongoing concerns regarding poor communication in relation to road closures in Leeds. It was noted that the parish council had not received formal notice of the current closure associated with works to the damaged wall in Lower Street. Members expressed concern that this was not an isolated case and referred to previous closures where little or no warning had been provided.

Concerns were also raised about the confusion and disruption caused when closures were not clearly signed, especially where road closure signs did not indicate the exact location of the closure. Members stressed that this caused significant inconvenience for residents, workers and visitors travelling through the village.

KCC Cllr Dixon acknowledged these concerns and confirmed that Kent County Council was aware of the need for better signage and more specific information on closure notices, especially in rural areas. It was reported that improvements to signing arrangements were being considered as part of new highway maintenance contract arrangements.

Members also raised the cumulative impact of repeated road closures in the village and the need for better coordination between Kent County Council, utilities and other bodies carrying out works, particularly where multiple routes were affected at the same time.

Discussions took place on the issue of heavy goods vehicles travelling through Leeds village. Members and residents reported that HGVs continued to use the village inappropriately, despite restrictions, causing damage, disruption and danger on unsuitable roads. Specific concern was raised regarding

repeated movements linked to local commercial destinations outside the village and the lack of effective enforcement.

Suggestions were discussed including improved signage, weight restriction enforcement, and the possible use of cameras or other systems capable of identifying offending vehicles. It was recognised that stronger enforcement would likely be necessary if the issue was to reduce in any meaningful way.

Members also reiterated concerns regarding speeding traffic through the village, especially near the school. Although a 20mph restriction was already in place, it was noted that this was frequently ignored and that enforcement remained limited.

Members again raised the need for safer crossing arrangements close to the school and the representative advised that these concerns could be considered further through the Highways Improvement Plan process.

Concerns were also raised regarding edge deterioration and damage to sections of road where larger vehicles had run off the carriageway. It was agreed that this should be investigated further.

The Chairman raised the anticipated future road closure required for the rebuilding of the retaining wall in Lower Street. Members expressed serious concern about the effect this could have on village access and local businesses, particularly if the road were to be closed for a lengthy period. It was noted that better communication and careful consideration of traffic management options would be essential. The representative agreed to investigate the lack of notification regarding the current closure and to report back.

b. Other highways

Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

Members were advised that progress had been made on the Highways Improvement Plan.

It was reported that the Vice-Chairman had held an initial meeting with Highways officers and that the current draft HIP focused on the following items:

1. Penfold Hill – possible installation of digital speed signs and associated traffic measures.
2. Enforcement of the 17-ton weight restriction and issues relating to the bridge.
3. Reduction of the speed limit on Caring Lane from 60mph to 40mph.
4. Safer crossing arrangements near the school.

Members supported the items raised on the HIP.

Resolved: That the four items listed above be approved as the current basis of the Leeds Parish Council Highways Improvement Plan.

c. 13/14 bus review

To receive an update on this matter.

An update was received in relation to the local bus service. It was reported that a meeting had been arranged with the bus operator and further information would be brought back to a future meeting.

7. Clerks Report.

The Clerk's Report was received and noted by Members.

The Clerk reported that there were no additional matters requiring formal consideration beyond those already circulated to Members.

8. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman reported that he had no further matters to raise.

9. Parish Council Communication.

Members discussed issues relating to parish council communications and the use of council email accounts.

It was noted that some councillors were still not receiving emails through their .gov.uk council email addresses because these had not yet been fully set up. This had affected circulation of information, including planning correspondence requiring a timely response.

Members discussed the need for clearer expectations where urgent responses were required. It was suggested that, where appropriate, emails requiring a decision or view should specify a clear response deadline.

The Clerk explained that personal email addresses could no longer be used for formal council business and that councillors would need to ensure their .gov.uk accounts were properly set up.

It was agreed that the Clerk would resend the relevant setup and password reset details to those councillors who had not yet activated or accessed their parish council email accounts.

Action: Clerk to action.

10. Financial Matters:

a. Financial Statement.

To receive and approve the financial statement and payments – report circulated with meeting papers.

The financial statement was approved proposed by Cllr China seconded by Cllr Greeff and agreed by all present.

11. KCC Councillors Report.

No report was received from the Kent County Councillor Linden Kemkaran.

The update from the Kent County Council Deputy Cabinet Members for Highways under item 6 was noted.

12. MBC Councillors Report.

Cllr Fort gave her report to the meeting.

She advised that the new Local Plan Review process would shortly begin again and that there would be a fresh call for sites. She noted that this was likely to lead to renewed uncertainty, as landowners across the borough would have the opportunity to promote land for development.

Concern was expressed that this approach could result in further development pressure without the necessary supporting infrastructure, including transport improvements such as a relief road.

It was reported that the overall process was likely to take approximately two years.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Fort for her report.

13. **LGR and Community Governance Review.**

No matters were raised.

14. **Planning Matters.**

a. To consider Planning Applications Received.

26/500899/LBC - 2-3 Chapel Cottages Upper Street Leeds Kent ME17 1SN
Listed Building Consent for erection of a garden shed (works completed).

Members considered the application.

PC Comment – No Objections

26/500546/ADV - Ledian Gardens The Grange Kings Square Leeds
Advertisement consent for installation of a new advertisement on an existing non-illuminated hoarding sign.

Members discussed the previous parish council objection and the response received from the applicant's planning consultant. It was noted that the applicant contended the signage was only temporary and would remain until the completion of Phase 3 of the development. Members considered, however, that this amounted to a long-term and effectively indefinite arrangement and that the parish council's concerns regarding the scale and permanence of the hoarding remained valid.

Resolved: That the Parish Council's objection to application 26/500546/ADV should remain unchanged and continue to stand.

b. MBC Decisions and Appeals

The following decisions were noted:

26/500501/SUB

Caring Stud Caring Road Leeds Kent ME17 1TH

Submission of details pursuant to condition 3 (External Materials), subject to 25/504214/FULL.

Application Permitted

c. Other Planning Matters

No other matters were raised.

15. **Parish Maintenance.**

To receive an update on Parish Maintenance.

a. Parish Maintenance

An update was received on general parish maintenance matters.

The Chairman reported that Steve Waring had now been awarded the maintenance contract for the next 12 months and was expected to begin seasonal works at the end of the week or early the following week. It was noted that the playing field, weeds around the children's play area and weeds around the tennis court all required attention.

Discussion also took place regarding trees and overgrowth adjoining the playing field area near Farmers Close. Members considered whether some vegetation might require inspection or maintenance, although it was noted that bird nesting season restricted what could currently be done.

It was suggested that a safety inspection by a tree surgeon should be considered later in the year.

b. Beautiful Leeds Campaign

Cllr Razzell reported that there was nothing further to report at this stage.

During the wider discussion on village appearance and volunteer involvement, Members spoke about litter, dog fouling and pride in the village environment

Members discussed whether a more focused volunteer or “friends” type group might help with specific areas such as the playing field or other village locations.

Concern was again raised regarding dog fouling, particularly near the church and along the public footpath towards Leeds Castle.

It was proposed by Cllr Razzell, seconded by Cllr China and agreed by all present that the Parish Council should pursue the installation of an additional dog waste bin on the public footpath towards Leeds Castle, subject to Maidstone Borough Council approval and the suitability of the location.

Action: Clerk to progress.

16. Leeds Playground, Playing Field, Tennis Courts & Pavillion.

Members received an update on the sports field, playground and pavilion matters.

Damaged Height Barrier – insurance claim

The Clerk reported that the height barrier repair was not covered under the council’s insurance in this instance and that the council had therefore had to meet the cost directly. It was noted that the repair had cost approximately £800 excluding VAT.

The Clerk explained that the issue had arisen during a period when the pavilion had been brought under the parish council’s insurance arrangements, which had led to some confusion regarding the extent of cover. Members noted that the position had now been clarified.

Meeting to discuss playing field and pavilion hire

It was confirmed that the proposed meeting to discuss the playing field, pavilion hire and associated use arrangements had not yet taken place.

Members agreed that this needed to be progressed without delay and that the football club should be included within the same discussion.

The Clerk advised that a report had previously been circulated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman and would now be circulated more widely.

Members also briefly discussed use of the pavilion and confirmed that community use would take priority where appropriate.

Playground repairs

The Chairman reported that he had taken Brian Doyle to inspect the children’s play area following the annual safety inspection findings. A number of works were identified, including repairs to fencing, a small hole in the slide requiring welding, and gate compliance issues. A quotation of £575 had been received from Brian Doyle, which was significantly lower than the earlier quote obtained from Safeplay.

Members were satisfied that the works required should proceed, subject to the Clerk issuing the necessary instruction.

17. Street Lighting.

To receive a report on Parish Street Lighting.

The Chairman reported that there had been no recent street lighting faults and noted that, since the LED upgrade, the parish council had experienced a much more reliable service.

18. Parish Council Events.

Members noted the arrangements already discussed for the litter pick and the May Fair.

Remembrance silhouettes

Members discussed the possible purchase of remembrance silhouettes. It was noted that options previously suggested had included a soldier and a female service figure, although no final decision had yet been made on the style, number, siting or storage arrangements.

Possible locations discussed included the church and another suitable location within the village. Members acknowledged that further information on designs, prices and durability would be needed before a final decision could be taken.

It was agreed that the Clerk would circulate options to Members for consideration ahead of the next meeting.

Annual Meeting of the Parish

Members discussed whether an Annual Meeting of the Parish should be held this year.

The Clerk explained that there was no legal requirement for the Parish Council to call a meeting, although it had traditionally been held, usually immediately before the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council. It was further noted that attendance in recent years had been very limited.

Members agreed that the meeting should still be held in keeping with tradition, with invitations to village organisations as usual.

Resolved: That an Annual Meeting of the Parish be held prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Members also discussed the KALC Community Award and considered that presentation at the village fair might be preferable, subject to the certificate being received in time.

A further event was discussed in relation to “No Mow” / community volunteer work on the churchyard and surrounding area.

After discussion, it was agreed that a community volunteer session would be arranged for Saturday 27th June 2026 at 10.00am.

It was agreed that this should be publicised in the parish magazine.

Resolved: That the community volunteer / “Big Mo” event be held on Saturday 27th June 2026 at 10.00am.

During this item, a further issue was raised regarding the ownership of the area at the entrance to the church car park where potholes had formed. It was noted that this land did not appear to belong to the parish council and that ownership remained unclear.

It was agreed that the Clerk would carry out a Land Registry check, if possible, to try to establish ownership of the land at the entrance to the church car park.

19. Items for next Agenda.

No matters were reported.

20. Date of next meeting.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12th May 2026.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.35pm.

Signed: _____

Chairman

Dated: _____