

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Leeds Parish Council held on Tuesday, 12th May 2026
at 7.20pm in the Leeds and Broomfield Village Hall

Councillor's present:

Cllr Bob China
Cllr Scott Bernini
Cllr Gill Fort
Cllr Barnie Razzell
Cllr Richard Springford

Also present:

Sherrie Babington – Parish Clerk
Representative from Inspired Villages
Four members of the Public

The meeting was chaired by Cllr China.

1. To elect a chairman.

Nominations were invited for the position of Chairman.

Cllr Bernini proposed that Cllr Bob China be elected Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Springford and agreed by all present.

Resolved: That Cllr Bob China be elected Chairman of Leeds Parish Council for the municipal year 2026/2027.

2. To receive the Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Chairman's Declaration of Acceptance of Office was received.

3. To elect a vice-chairman.

Nominations were invited for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Cllr China proposed that Cllr Scott Bernini be elected Vice-Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Springford and agreed by all present.

Resolved: That Cllr Scott Bernini be elected Vice-Chairman of Leeds Parish Council for the municipal year 2026/2027.

4. 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 Ingram – Work
- Cllr Greeff - Work

Apologies were also received from:

- KCC Councillor Linden Kemkaran

5. To appoint Committees & Representatives and outside bodies.

Members considered the appointment of committees, representatives and outside bodies.

It was agreed that the majority of appointments should remain as set out on the agenda, with agreed changes.

The following appointments were agreed:

Planning

All Councillors

Finance

Cllr China

Cllr Fort

Highways

Cllr Fort

Cllr Bernini

Cllr Greeff

Representatives

Footpaths – Cllr Springford

Police Liaison – Cllr Ingram

KALC – papers to be circulated to all Members, with attendance by any available councillor

Playing Field / Pavilion – Cllr China and Cllr Razzell

Environmental / Maintenance – Cllr China and Cllr Razzell

Street Lighting – Cllr China

Parish Magazine – Cllrs Fort and China

School Liaison – Cllr Greeff

Public Transportation – Cllr Springford

Communication – Cllr Razzell

Website – Parish Clerk

CCTV – All Councillors, with Cllrs China and Greeff as lead councillors

Other Appointments & Memberships

Internal Auditor – Martin Thomas and Co

External Auditor – Mazars

Bank – Cooperative Bank

Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

Resolved: That the appointments and memberships be approved as set out above.

6. 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.

7. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting had been circulated to all Members.

Members considered the minutes and agreed that they were an accurate record.

It was proposed by Cllr Bernini, seconded by Cllr China and agreed by all present that the minutes be approved.

The minutes were then signed and dated by the Chairman of the meeting.

8. Matters arising from the Minutes.

The Clerk reported that Land Registry searches had been carried out in relation to the area at the entrance to the church car park where the uneven cobbles / surface had previously been discussed.

Searches had been undertaken against the playing field, the cottage and the church, and the area in question did not appear to be within the registered ownership of the Parish Council or the church. The land appeared to be unregistered.

Members considered that the area may be highway land and therefore potentially the responsibility of Kent County Council. It was agreed that the Clerk would advise the church that the land did not appear to belong to the Parish Council and would also report the uneven surface to Kent County Council.

Action: Clerk to advise the church and report the uneven surface to Kent County Council.

Cllr Razzell asked whether there had been any update regarding the proposed additional dog waste bin.

The Clerk advised that Maidstone Borough Council was reviewing the request and assessing the proposed location. It was noted that the initial response had not been particularly positive, but the matter remained under consideration.

9. Public Comments and Observations.

A member of the public raised concerns regarding works taking place in woodland / land beyond the area near The George and towards land behind residential properties. It was reported that machinery, diggers and bulldozers had been heard and seen, and there was concern that trees or vegetation might be being removed.

Members discussed the location and whether the works related to land associated with recent development permissions. It was noted that parts of the area were outside the conservation area and that the extent of conservation area and tree protection coverage was not always as large as residents assumed. However, concern was expressed that if trees were being removed during the bird nesting season, this could be problematic.

Members noted that the Parish Council would need evidence in order to understand exactly what was taking place and whether it was within the scope of any planning permission or other lawful works. The resident indicated that they may be able to obtain video or photographic evidence.

It was agreed that any evidence received could be considered and, if appropriate, cross-referenced against relevant planning permissions or raised with the relevant authority.

A further discussion took place regarding heavy goods vehicles travelling through the village. Residents reported that HGVs continued to travel through Leeds despite restrictions and that this was causing damage to listed properties.

Members discussed the importance of gathering evidence of damage, including dates of repairs, photographs, video evidence and records of incidents. Cllr Bernini explained that this would support the Highways Improvement Plan and help strengthen the case to Kent County Council and other relevant bodies. It was noted that the Highways Improvement Plan needed to focus on a small number of priority items and that evidence of damage to listed buildings would be useful in supporting broader highway safety and traffic management proposals.

The issue of weight restriction enforcement was discussed. It was noted that restrictions existed but that enforcement by the police was limited due to resourcing. Members also discussed the possibility of better signage, camera enforcement, and the need to distinguish between legitimate access and inappropriate through traffic.

Members agreed that residents should be encouraged to send any evidence of damage, incidents, photographs, video footage or repair records to the Parish Clerk so that this could be retained and used in support of the Parish Council's highways work.

The representative from Inspired Villages also raised the Parish Council's objection to the advertisement / hoarding planning application at Ledian Gardens. It was explained that the Parish Council had already agreed that its objection should stand, but Members needed to consider whether the request for the application to be called in to Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee should be maintained.

Members discussed the matter with the representative. It was clarified that the application related to the advertising displayed on the hoarding rather than the hoarding structure itself, which Inspired Villages advised was present under permitted development rights during construction. Members expressed concern that the size and appearance of the hoarding was not sympathetic to the village, conservation area or nearby listed buildings, and that residents had lived with construction hoarding for a significant period.

Members accepted that calling in the application may not be an effective use of committee time if the hoarding itself was permitted but agreed that the Parish Council's objection to the advertising should remain. The representative agreed to take away Members' concerns and consider whether a more sympathetic appearance or alternative could be provided.

Resolved: That the Parish Council's objection to the advertisement application remain, but that the request for the application to be called in to Maidstone Borough Council Planning Committee be withdrawn.

Action: Clerk to notify Maidstone Borough Council that the Parish Council's objection remains but that the call-in request is withdrawn.

10. Highways Matters.

a. General Update:

Members discussed the retaining wall / damaged wall near the church and Lower Street. The Chairman reported that there had been some activity on site, including concrete barriers being placed in the area. Members understood that the insurance company or those responsible for the works were expected to provide a programme, although no official information had yet been received by the Parish Council.

It was noted that the Parish Council had no formal role in the works but wished to be kept informed because of the likely impact on village access, local residents and road users. Members discussed concerns that works may involve drainage and further engineering works, potentially resulting in a lengthy road closure, although no formal confirmation had been received.

Members reiterated that clear communication would be important if any prolonged road closure was proposed.

Members also noted that a short road closure was expected in June in connection with other works.

b. Highways Improvement Plan (HIP).

Cllr Bernini advised that the Highways Improvement Plan had now been submitted and that the Parish Council was awaiting a response.

The importance of evidence to support the HIP was again noted, particularly in relation to HGV movements, weight restriction enforcement, damage to listed buildings, speeding and village safety.

c. 13/14 bus review

To receive an update on this matter.

Cllr Razzell gave an update on the 13/14 bus review.

It was reported that he had met with Norman from Nu-Venture and that the operator was due to attend a future Parish Council meeting, expected to be in July.

Members considered correspondence received regarding proposed changes to the Nu-Venture 13/14 services and the 59 Wednesday-only service. It was noted that the proposal would involve sharing the vehicle and driver resource currently allocated to services 13/14 in order to operate a replacement Wednesday-only service covering the existing route of service 59. This would result in a reduction in the Wednesday timetable for services 13/14.

Cllr Razzell expressed concern that the already limited rural bus service would be further reduced. He noted that the Saturday service had previously been lost and that any further reduction would be disappointing. Members discussed the importance of rural bus services but also recognised that usage levels and timing of services were important.

Members discussed whether more could be done to understand passenger numbers and to ensure that services operated at times that residents actually needed. It was suggested that a meeting or group involving parish councils, the operator and residents could help identify what service was needed and how it might be better promoted.

Members also discussed issues with bus stop timetable information and the need for timetables to be accurate.

After discussion, Members agreed that the Parish Council should oppose any further reduction to the already limited 13/14 bus service and should request usage information where available.

Resolved: That Leeds Parish Council objects to the proposed reduction in the Wednesday timetable for services 13/14 and requests that further information be provided regarding passenger usage and options to improve, rather than reduce, the service.

Action: Clerk to submit the Parish Council's objection to the proposed bus service changes.

11. Clerks Report.

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

12. Chairman's Report.

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

13. Parish Council Communication.

Cllr Razzell gave an update on Parish Council communication.

It was reported that updates had been made to the Parish Council website, including information relating to buses and volunteering.

Cllr Razzell advised that items had also been publicised on Facebook where requested. He remained keen to add short councillor profiles / pen pictures to the website and reminded those Members who had not yet provided one to do so.

14. Financial Matters:

a. Financial Statement.

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

Members received and considered the financial statement and payments report circulated with the meeting papers.

Members were satisfied with the financial information presented.

Resolved: That the financial statement and payments be approved.

b. 2025/2026 Accounts, Audit and AGAR

The Clerk presented the 2025/2026 Accounts, Internal Audit Report and Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

The Clerk explained that the Annual Internal Audit Report within the AGAR had been completed and that the internal auditor had reviewed the relevant records, including accounts, payroll, VAT, minutes and website information.

Members were advised that there were no issues raised by the internal auditor. The Clerk reminded Members that the previous year's exercise of public rights period had been calculated one day incorrectly and that, as a result, the appropriate governance assertion had been answered "No" for this year in order to reflect that issue transparently.

The Clerk explained that the AGAR would be submitted to the external auditor together with the required supporting information, including explanations of variances and reserves. The accounts themselves would not be submitted in full to the external auditor, but the AGAR and supporting documents would be.

Members noted the internal auditor's report, the annual governance statement and the accounting statements.

It was proposed by Cllr Bernini, seconded by Cllr China and agreed by all present that the AGAR and accounts be approved.

Resolved: That the 2025/2026 Accounts be approved.

Resolved: That the Annual Internal Audit Report be received and noted.

Resolved: That the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/2026 be approved.

Resolved: That the Accounting Statements for 2025/2026 be approved.

The relevant documents were signed by the Chairman and Clerk/RFO as required.

15. KCC Councillors Report.

A written report had been received from KCC Councillor Linden Kemkaran and circulated to Members.

16. MBC Councillors Report.

Cllr Fort gave her report to the meeting.

She gave a brief update and advised that further information was expected the following month regarding which unitary authority area Maidstone would fall within as part of the local government reorganisation process.

17. **LGR and Community Governance Review.**

No matters were raised.

18. **Planning Matters.**

a. To consider Planning Applications Received.

Members considered the planning applications listed on the agenda.

26/501459/FULL – Bay Tree Cottage, Upper Street, Leeds, Kent ME17 1RZ

Erection of detached two storey C2 Assisted Living Unit, amended alternative scheme to permission 19/504579/FULL, with associated landscaping.

Members considered the application and noted the earlier update received from Inspired Villages.

PC Comment – No Objection.

26/501418/LBC – 2 Brogden Farm Cottages, Old Mill Road, Leeds, Kent

Listed Building Consent for erection of garden sheds, outdoor kitchen pod and railing and gates to front elevation. Terrace extension and installation of limestone paving and air source heat pump to garden room.

Members considered the application.

PC Comment – No Objection.

26/501419/FULL – 2 Brogden Farm Cottages, Old Mill Road, Leeds, Kent

Erection of garden sheds, outdoor kitchen pod and railing and gates to front elevation. Terrace extension and installation of limestone paving and air source heat pump to garden room.

Members considered the application.

PC Comment – No Objection.

26/501613/LBC – 1 Brogden Farm Cottages, Old Mill Road, Leeds, Kent ME17

Re-point brickwork on the south and east elevations, replacement of damaged bricks on the east elevation and repair slipped and damaged slate roof coverings on east elevation.

Members considered the application.

PC Comment – No Objection.

b. MBC Decisions and Appeals

The following decisions were noted:

25/504646/SUB – Arnoldbrae Oast, Back Street, Leeds, Kent ME17 1TF

Submission of details pursuant to Condition 3 – External Joinery, Internal Joinery & Details of new internal partitions, and Condition 4 – Flue details, subject to 25/502908/LBC.

Application Permitted.

26/501001/NMAMD – Caring Stud, Caring Road, Leeds, Kent ME17 1TH

Non-Material Amendment to 25/504214/FULL: Demolition of redundant hydrotherapy centre and kennel buildings and the erection of 1 no. new self-build dwelling with associated car barn, landscaping, access and parking. Better internal arrangements, improvements to façade and alteration of approved driveway material approved under 26/500501/SUB.

Application Permitted.

26/500378/LAWPRO – Inverarnold, Back Street, Leeds, Kent ME17 1TE

Lawful Development Certificate of proposed new garden store building adjacent to the existing garage.

Application Permitted.

26/500377/FULL – Inverarnold, Back Street, Leeds, Kent ME17 1TE

Demolition of existing conservatory. Erection of a two-storey and loft space side extension and single-storey rear extension, part retrospective.

Application Permitted.

c. Other Planning Matters

No other matters were raised.

19. Parish Maintenance.

To receive an update on Parish Maintenance.

a. Parish Maintenance

The Chairman reported that he had visited the playing field with Contractor Steven Waring to look at trees at the Langley end of the sports field following concerns raised by a resident that some trees may be dangerous.

It was reported that no obvious immediate danger had been identified, but that the trees were overgrown and had not been managed properly, particularly towards Farmers Close. It was noted that some tidying and trimming would be beneficial.

Members discussed whether a tree surgeon inspection should be obtained, particularly as the trees were on the playing field and therefore a public area. Cllr Razzell offered to take a further look, take photographs and identify the areas of concern, following which Members could decide whether a tree surgeon inspection or works were required.

Action: Cllr Razzell to inspect the trees at the Langley end of the playing field, take photographs and report back.

Members also discussed possible Sports England grant funding for facilities such as the tennis courts. The Clerk advised that Sports England had contacted the Parish Council to confirm details of the sports field and had sent a link to potential grant funding. It was agreed that this could be explored further as part of wider playing field discussions and any future community / friends' group.

Action: Clerk to forward the Sports England grant information to Cllr Razzell.

Members discussed the Christmas tree and the existing lights, which were now partly hidden due to tree growth. Members discussed whether a contractor with a cherry picker could remove the lights and whether a local tree surgeon could also trim the tree.

It was agreed that options and costs should be explored.

Action: Cllr China to explore options for trimming the Christmas tree.

b. Beautiful Leeds Campaign

Cllr Razzell gave an update on the Beautiful Leeds Campaign.

He explained that the aim was to encourage residents to become involved in improving the appearance of the village through small, manageable volunteer actions. The intention was to create a framework and network, while allowing residents to suggest ideas and take ownership of local areas.

Examples discussed included planters, small-scale litter picking, looking after defined areas, and community-led improvements. It was emphasised that the purpose was not to rely on one or two

individuals doing everything, but to encourage a wider community approach so that activity was sustainable.

Members supported the approach and noted that the scheme could be publicised through the website, Facebook and volunteer sign-up form.

20. 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 insurance position regarding the damaged height barrier had developed. Although it had initially appeared that the insurer might not cover the claim, the insurer had now requested evidence from the Parish Council's asset register. The Clerk advised that the height barrier was included on the asset register and this would be supplied to the insurer.

The Clerk also reported that, as the insurance renewal was due, she had written to the insurer asking for confirmation that the height barriers would be specifically covered going forward to avoid any future misunderstanding.

Meeting to discuss playing field and pavilion hire

Members discussed the need for a meeting to consider the playing field and pavilion hire arrangements, and football use for the future direction of the playing field.

Cllr Bernini advised that the meeting was intended to look at the future strategy for the playing field, rather than simply managing arrangements year by year. Members discussed whether this should be linked to the wider playing field group / grant funding work.

It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged before the July meeting, ideally by the end of June or early July, so that any matters requiring formal decision could be brought back to the Parish Council before the start of the next season.

Members discussed whether the meeting should be informal or minuted. It was agreed that the Clerk could attend if required and that minutes would be useful.

Action: Cllr Bernini to email Members to arrange a playing field / pavilion meeting before the end of June or early July.

Cllr Razzell also raised a possible future consideration regarding overflow parking and the layout of the play area. He suggested that there may be an unused section near the play area which could potentially be reconfigured to improve overflow parking. Members noted that the land was designated as play area and that previous discussions had not supported use of the children's play area for parking. It was agreed that this would need careful consideration and no decision was made.

21. Street Lighting.

To receive a report on Parish Street Lighting.

The Chairman reported that there were no known street lighting faults.

22. Parish Council Events.

Members received an update on forthcoming Parish Council events.

It was reported that the "Big Mow" / community volunteer event had been advertised.

An update was provided on the summer picnic event. It was reported that arrangements were progressing well, with the band and bar confirmed. A community tent was planned to showcase local community groups and provide volunteer sign-up opportunities and an ideas board / bucket to encourage residents to share suggestions.

Members discussed the cost of hiring gazebos or marquees. It was reported that hiring several gazebos could cost approximately £1,000, whereas purchasing three pop-up gazebos could be more cost-effective, with options discussed at around £350 to £600 depending on quality. The gazebos could potentially be reused for future Parish Council events or loaned to village groups.

Members also discussed staging and electricity arrangements. Cllr China agreed to look into the temporary electrical supply for the event.

Action: Cllr China to review the temporary electricity arrangements for the summer picnic.

It was reported that local groups, including the church, WI, Speedwatch and LADS, were being invited or encouraged to participate. Members also discussed the need to prepare an events calendar for the following year and to provide a clearer budget based on previous events.

The Clerk reminded Members that reimbursement claims would need to be submitted with invoices.

Members also discussed future storage needs for event equipment, including the possibility of a storage container in a suitable location, as equipment such as gazebos, traditional games and event materials may otherwise be difficult to store securely and dry.

Remembrance Silhouettes

Members discussed the possible purchase of Remembrance silhouettes.

Options discussed included a Tommy soldier and a nurse, particularly given the history of Leeds and its wartime connections. Members considered possible locations, including near the church / beacon area and outside the Memorial Hall. It was suggested that one silhouette could potentially be placed in each location.

Members also discussed the need for secure and stable mounting, noting that silhouettes in other villages had been vandalised and that mounting on a timber board could provide additional stability.

No final decision was made on the number, type or locations of silhouettes. It was agreed that the matter could be considered again nearer September, as the silhouettes would not be required until closer to November.

23. Items for next Agenda.

No matters were reported.

24. Date of next meeting.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday, 2nd June 2026.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.55pm.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Dated: _____