

**The Minutes of the Meeting of Leeds Parish Council on Tuesday, 13th January 2026
at 7pm in the Leeds and Broomfield Village Hall**

Councillor's present:

Bernini
China
Fort
Ingram
Razzell
Springford

Also present:

Sherrie Babington – Parish Clerk
Cllr Gary Cook (MBC)
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 Greeff – Work commitment

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 Bernini as a true record, seconded by Cllr China 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.

A resident from Caring Lane attended the meeting to address the Parish Council regarding a petition to reduce the speed limit in Caring Lane and Back Street.

She advised that she was representing just under 80 residents of Caring Lane and Back Street. The section within Leeds Parish is currently subject to the national speed limit (60mph), whereas the Bearsted section is 30mph.

She reported that residents were increasingly concerned about:

- Increased traffic volumes following development at Langley
- Use of the lane as a “rat run” during congestion on the A20/A2163
- Excessive speeds along long straight stretches
- High pedestrian usage including walkers and ramblers using public footpaths
- Four livery yards within the lane with regular equestrian movements
- Residents accessing bus stops
- Elderly residents using mobility scooters

Members discussed the matter in detail and clarified that any change to the speed limit would require submission through the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) process and would ultimately require Kent County Council approval and the implementation of a Traffic Regulation Order.

It was acknowledged that cost considerations are likely to arise as part of the KCC assessment process; however, the Parish Council’s role at this stage is to formally support and submit the request for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the Parish Council supports the proposal in principle and that the PC submits the request via the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) process. No financial commitment was made by the Parish Council at this stage, pending Kent County Council’s response and clarification of any associated costs.

6. Highways Matters.

a. General Update:

Members reviewed previously reported highways matters including:

- Overgrown verges encroaching onto footpaths along Leeds Road
- Obstruction at the top of Lower Street
- Footpath Leeds to Langley requiring further clearance
- Footpath opposite Leeds Castle
- Children Crossing signage at Foley Hill (damaged/missing)
- Build-out bollard requiring straightening

Members agreed that updated photographic evidence should be submitted to KCC to support re-reporting where works remain incomplete.

b. Other highways

Highways Improvement Plan (HIP)

Cllr Bernini reported that the HIP meeting had been delayed pending speed survey data and wall repair considerations.

The Caring Lane speed reduction request will now be added to the HIP priorities.

Traffic Mirror – Church Car Park / School Fence

The Chairman discussed a possible request for a traffic mirror near the Church car park.

The following points were made:

- KCC does not generally install or support mirrors due to liability concerns.
- If mirrors are installed on private land, responsibility lies with the landowner.

It was agreed that a request would be submitted via the KCC portal to obtain an official response.

Action: Clerk to progress.

Retaining Wall Repairs

Members discussed the planned repair works to the damaged retaining wall, and it was noted that:

- KCC may consider a full road closure.
- Members preferred temporary traffic lights rather than a full closure.
- Concern was expressed about the impact on local businesses, particularly The George.
- The cost difference between traffic lights and closure was discussed.
- Members questioned whether works could be coordinated with anticipated Southeast Water infrastructure works to avoid multiple closures.

It was agreed that KCC should be asked to consider traffic lights and coordination of works.

Action: Clerk to action.

Southeast Water – Infrastructure Repairs

Extensive discussion took place regarding:

- Recent water outages.
- Poor communication from Southeast Water.
- Infrastructure resilience concerns.
- Ongoing and future water main works in Lower Street.

Members agreed that Southeast Water should be encouraged to coordinate any road closures to minimise disruption.

7. Clerks Report.

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

KALC COMMUNITY AWARDS SCHEME 2026

The Council agreed a recipient for the KALC Community Award.

8. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman reported on the following matters:

- Thanked volunteers involved in the Christmas event.
- Raised concerns regarding recent Southeast Water outages and the need for emergency resilience planning.

The Clerk confirmed that a Parish Resilience Plan exists, and it was agreed that this would be published on the website.

The report was received and noted.

9. Parish Council Communication.

Cllr Razzell reported that this was work in progress.

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 Fort seconded by Cllr Ingram and agreed by all present.

The Clerk raised concerns regarding EDF street lighting invoices.

Members were advised that a large invoice had recently been received from EDF in relation to the parish street lighting supply. The invoice totalled £4,066.57 and relates to adjustments made by the supplier following identification of issues with the metering. It was explained that EDF have advised that the previous meter configuration had been incorrect and that revised readings have now been applied to the account.

Members expressed concern regarding the clarity of the billing and the apparent increase in street lighting costs, noting that the Parish Council had historically operated under an unmetered supply arrangement. Members discussed the matter and agreed that further investigation is required before any payment is authorised.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk does not pay the invoice pending further investigation.

Action: Clerk to progress and investigate as agreed.

b. Budget 2026/27

The Clerk presented the draft budget for the 2026/2027 financial year for Members' consideration. In preparing the draft budget, the Clerk had reviewed current expenditure levels, anticipated cost increases and potential future projects which may require funding.

Members discussed the importance of maintaining a balanced and prudent budget that allows the Parish Council to continue delivering its existing services whilst also ensuring that sufficient reserves are maintained to support future projects. In particular, Members noted that a number of longer-term considerations may arise in the coming years, including improvements to parish facilities such as the tennis courts and ongoing maintenance of the playing field and associated infrastructure. In addition, Members recognised that potential changes arising from wider local government restructuring could place additional responsibilities on parish councils in the future, which further emphasises the need for sound financial planning.

A number of precept scenarios were considered by Members, ranging from maintaining the current level through to higher percentage increases. Members carefully considered the potential impact on residents while also recognising the need to ensure that the Council remains financially resilient in the face of increasing costs. Following discussion, Members agreed that a modest increase would represent the most appropriate balance between maintaining services and limiting the impact on council taxpayers.

It was therefore agreed that the Parish Council will set a precept for the 2026/2027 financial year of £56,550, representing a 5% increase on the current year. Members noted that this equates to an approximate increase of around £6 per annum for a Band D property within the parish.

Members were satisfied that this level of increase is proportionate and will ensure that the Council is able to continue operating effectively while maintaining appropriate financial reserves.

RESOLVED:

To increase the Precept by 5% for 2026/27.

This results in a total precept of £56,550 and an approximate increase of £6 per Band D property per annum.

Proposed - Cllr China,

Seconded - Cllr Fort

Agreed unanimously.

11. KCC Councillors Report.

The KCC Councillor was not in attendance.

12. MBC Councillors Report.

Cllr Cook provided an update on:

- Local Government Reorganisation proposals
- Community Governance Review
- Potential Town Council arrangements
- Financial implications for residents

The report was received and noted.

13. Devolution and Community Governance Review.

No further matters were raised.

14. Planning Matters.**a. To consider Planning Applications Received.**

25/504517/ADV - Ledian Gardens The Grange Kings Square Leeds Kent
Advertisement consent for 1no. Totem Signage Board.

PC Comments submitted to MBC

b. MBC Decisions and Appeals

The following decisions were noted:

25/504456/LBC

Abbey Mill House Lower Street Leeds Kent ME17 1RR

Listed Building Consent for installation of a wood burning stove on the ground floor in place of a removed gas stove under a pre-existing chimney.

Application Permitted

25/504317/PNQCLA

Arnold Hill Farm Back Street Leeds Kent ME17 1TF

Prior notification for the change of use of existing block, brick and stone built redundant agricultural building and any land within its curtilage from agricultural to a pair of two dwellinghouses and associated operation development. For its prior approval to: Transport and Highways impact of the development. Noise impacts of the development. Contamination risks on the site. Flooding risks on the site. Whether the location or siting of the building makes it otherwise impractical or undesirable for the use of the building to change from agricultural use to C3 (dwellinghouses). Design and external appearance impacts on the building. Provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses.

Prior Approval Granted

25/504214/FULL

Caring Stud Caring Road Leeds Kent ME17 1TH

Demolition of redundant hydrotherapy centre and kennel buildings and the erection of 1no. new self-build dwelling with associated car barn, landscaping, access and parking.

Application Permitted

25/503900/LBC

Brook House Lower Street Leeds Kent ME17 1RR

Listed Building Consent for removal of white paint to the front and return elevations, including repair and repointing of brickwork with lime mortar as required.

Application Refused

The Council hereby REFUSES listed building consent for the above for the following Reason(s):

(1) The proposal seeks the use of inappropriate methods, being the use of mechanical

intervention which has the potential to damage historic fabric and adversely affect significance. The application fails to demonstrate that public benefits which would outweigh the harm would result from this proposal which is therefore contrary to policies LPRENV1 and LPRSP14(B) of the Maidstone Local Plan Review (2021-2038) 2024 and paragraphs 202, 212, 213 and 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

c. Other Planning Matters

No other matters were raised.

15. Parish Maintenance.

To receive an update on Parish Maintenance.

a. Parish Maintenance

- Damaged height barrier – insurance claim ongoing.

b. Beautiful Leeds Campaign

Cllr Razzell reported that he was progressing this initiative and would report back when more information was available.

Action: Cllr Razzell to progress and report back.

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

To receive a report on Leeds Playing Field.

Playing Field and Pavillion

Members discussed long-term management and future use of the playing field and pavilion.

It was agreed that an informal meeting would be held to consider future arrangements.

Height Barrier

Members discussed the ongoing insurance claim relating to the damaged height barrier. The Clerk to continue to pursue resolution with the insurer.

Action: Clerk to progress.

Play Area Grant

The Clerk reported that Maidstone Borough Council has confirmed that the site is recognised as a Strategically Important Play Area (SIPA) and that the Parish Council is eligible for a grant of up to £5,000 towards improvements or maintenance works to the play equipment. Members noted that the funding is available until March 2028, although it may be drawn down earlier should the Parish Council wish to progress works sooner.

Members discussed the condition of the existing play equipment and noted that some items may require repair or replacement in the coming years. It was agreed that obtaining quotations would allow the Parish Council to determine the most appropriate use of the available funding and plan any necessary works.

Action: Clerk to obtain quotations from a contractor to provide costs for any necessary repairs or replacement.

17. Street Lighting.

To receive a report on Parish Street Lighting.

Nothing further to report.

18. Parish Council Events.

Members considered the report regarding upcoming parish events within the village and a suggestion that the Parish Council may wish to consider marking future Remembrance Day events in the village with the installation of a black silhouette Tommy Soldier and nurse within the village.

Action: Clerk to investigate potential costs associated with purchasing a silhouette, Tommy Soldier.

19. Items for next Agenda.

No matters were reported.

20. Date of next meeting.

Due to Clerk holiday and hall availability constraints, it was agreed that the February meeting be cancelled. The next meeting will be held on 10th March 2026.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was closed to the press and public at 8.45pm.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Dated: _____