

LEEK TOWN COUNCIL
General Purposes Committee
MINUTES
Tuesday 21st April 2026

Chairman GP Cllr. Keith Hoptroff	Vice Chair GP Cllr. Sue Webster	Mayor Cllr. Derek Hilyer
Deputy Mayor Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst	Cllr. Kate Nicholls	Cllr. Mike Worthington
Cllr. Dee Young	Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst	Cllr. Stephen Wales
<i>4 members of the public present</i>	<i>Staff: V. Johnson</i>	<i>Minutes D. Wheat Clerk</i>

General Purposes Meeting followed the Town Council meeting

- 117. Welcome:** Chairman of General Purposes Cllr. Keith Hoptroff welcomed all present.
- 118. Apologies:** Cllr. Paul Powner and Cllr. Bill Cawley
- 119. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests,** other interests and consideration for the granting of dispensations. ***None declared***
- 120. Minutes of the General Purposes Meeting held on 17th March 2026 were approved.**
Proposed Cllr. Worthington – Seconded Cllr. Webster – All in favour
- 121. Matters arising from the minutes:**
- Tree Protection Orders** for trees in the grounds of Knivden Hall is to be discussed at the SMDC Planning Committee on Thursday 23rd April. A map of the proposed trees was circulated for information.
 - Correspondence from Mrs A Sharratt regarding the Neighbourhood Plan report in March.** Mrs Sharratt's name as a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee had been omitted from the report. The Town Council agreed that they valued Mrs. Sharratt contribution into the Neighbourhood Plan and apologised for the omission.
- 122. Finance & Governance:**
- In accordance with Local Government Act 1972 section5 (150) the following payments were approved for March 2026:**

Proposed – Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst – Seconded – Cllr. Webster – All in favour

<u>Voucher</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Net</u>	<u>VAT</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Payment Ref</u>
512	02/03/2026	£331.24	£-	£331.24	Pension Contributions	Month 11
502	03/03/2026	£3.00	£-	£3.00	Allotment Fee	Refund
503	03/03/2026	£20.00	£-	£20.00	Allotment Fee	Refund
508	04/03/2026	£13.87	£2.78	£16.65	Stationary	Office
513	04/03/2026	£629.45	£-	£629.45	Lengthsman Duties	Week 48
515	04/03/2026	£120.00	£-	£120.00	IT Repair	Office
516	04/03/2026	£140.00	£28.00	£168.00	Training	ILCA
517	05/03/2026	£27.37	£5.47	£32.84	Allotment Water	GSA
518	09/03/2026	£10.65	£-	£10.65	Stockwell Street Water	Office
519	10/03/2026	£14.00	£-	£14.00	Window Cleaner	Office
520	10/03/2026	£412.50	£-	£412.50	Lengthsman Duties	Week 49
523	16/03/2026	£287.50	£-	£287.50	Lengthsman Duties	Week 50
524	16/03/2026	£1,343.56	£-	£1,343.56	PAYE	Month 11
522	17/03/2026	£48.38	£2.42	£50.80	Nicholson Clock Electricity	NWM
525	18/03/2026	£437.44	£87.49	£524.93	Telephone & Broadband	Office
531	19/03/2026	£300.00	£60.00	£360.00	Plumber	Bank House
532	20/03/2026	£679.50	£135.90	£815.40	Bench and Planter	Prince St
533	20/03/2026	£180.00	£-	£180.00	Electrical PAT Testing	Office

526	23/03/2026	£330.60	£-	£330.60	Pension Contribution	Month 12	
534	24/03/2026	£350.00	£-	£350.00	Lengthsman Duties	Week 51	
527	25/03/2026	£1,340.08	£-	£1,340.08	PAYE	Month 12	
528/29	26/03/2026	£3,777.17	£-	£3,777.17	Staff Salaries	Month 12	
535	26/03/2026	£6.00	£-	£6.00	Allot. & Garden. Assoc. Membership		8688
530	30/03/2026	£362.50	£-	£362.50	Lengthsman Duties	Week 52	
536	31/03/2026	£4.47	£-	£4.47	Bank Charges	AC/3	
537	31/03/2026	£38.15	£-	£38.15	Bank Charges	AC/1	
		NET	VAT	TOTAL			
TOTAL		£11,207.43	£322.06	£11,529.49			

b) Bank Reconciliation 31/03/2026 – Approved – All in favour

Cash in Hand 01/04/2025	£ 35,274.16
ADD	
Receipts 01/04/2025 - 31/03/2026	£ 297,221.60
	£ 332,495.76
SUBTRACT	
Payments 01/04/2025 - 31/03/2026	£ 289,898.35
A Cash in Hand 31/03/2026	£ 42,597.41
(per Cash Book)	
Cash in hand per Bank Statements	
Petty Cash 31/03/2026	£ 0.00
Current Account 31/03/2026	£ 0.00
Current Account 2 (Reserve) 31/03/2026	£ 39,682.40
Events Account 31/03/2026	£ 2,478.01
	£ 42,160.41
B	
Less unrepresented payments	£ 0.00
Plus unrepresented receipts	£ 437.00
Adjusted Bank Balance	£ 42,597.41
A=B Checks out OK	

c. Town Council Community Grants:

Grant applications are coming in steadily. To note the application window will close on 30th April.
<https://leektowncouncil.gov.uk/community-grants/>

123. District Council Report: Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst gave updates on the following:

- a. **Town of Culture:** No further results have been announced to date.
- b. **Nighttime Economy:** Leek has been proposed as a pilot town to receive some funding to try out different ways to improve nighttime economy.

124. Committee Reports:

- a. **G.S.A - Green Spaces & Allotments:** Minutes were received with no questions raised.
- b. **W.M.C - War Memorials:** No meeting had been held in March.

c. T.E.C - Tourism, Events & Community:

- Regular meeting with Tourism officers and the Town Clerk are being held to spread the information about Staffordshire Moorlands tourism and to share Town Council organised events.
- Staffordshire Day is on 1st May. A delegation is going to parliament to represent the County.
- Staffordshire Moorlands Walking Festival is starting on 24th April for a week.

The Council identified facilities in the town which need improvement including;

- **Public toilets at Silk Street** – taps need attention. Faults should be reported to appropriate officers.
- **Benches** in places are in need of repair.
- **Leek Bus Station** toilets are subject to anti-social behaviour. They need decorating and security devices installing.

A discussion was then had about the improvements which could be made by charging a small fee for entry which could deter vandalism. Cllr. Worthington offered to find out how Ashbourne maintain their toilets to such a high standard.

d. Neighbourhood Plan:

The Regulation 14 public consultation has now ended. A large number of consultation responses have been received and will be compiled into a report to be analysed by the Planning Consultant at Urban Vision. The Neighbourhood Plan Committee met with SMDC Planning officers for an informal discussion about the next steps. The plan needs to fit within the parameters of SMDC Local Plan and to not conflict with those aims. It was intimated that the Referendum 16 will take place in May 2027 when the electorate will vote at a poll alongside the Town Council election. Thanks were minuted to John Emery, Ann Sharrat and Lesley Roberts for their work on the steering group.

The Website Love Leek, states that the plan covers the whole of the area of Leek Parish. A question was asked by Cllr Hilyer about the reference to the Town Centre boundary and that Big Mill is outside the Town Centre. The industries and the finance companies in the town should be mentioned. The section on Mills is not a plan in his opinion, more considerations to be taken into account when planning

Cllr Wales stated that Big Mill is now a brown field site and will be of interest to developers.

Cllr Lyn Swindlehurst raised concerns about the administrative aspect of how many hours are taken on the project by staff. The Clerk will make note of time spent on the project.

e. Finance:

Service Charge: Cllr Wales asked why the Service Charge matter is under confidential?

15 Stockwell Street is maintained by our staff or by contractors engaged by the council (for example window cleaner, fire extinguisher service). The service charge has been backdated 5 years which has caused the increase of the Precept in 2026 to rise by 24%. The Town Council needs to be transparent and inform members of the public.

Cllr Hoptroff responded that the Precept increase was to cover other factors which were clearly identified in the budget setting process. Cllr Hilyer reported that the rise is a contingency to account for three possible financial matters which could arise and as a result of internal auditors advice that the Councils general reserve is too low.

The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer clarified that in 2023 the Leek election cost £26.5K and in 2027 it is estimated to cost £30K due to the rise in postage costs, venue fees, printing costs and staffing. The Council need to have these funds in the reserve as an election is highly likely to be called for the 12 seats on Leek Town Council. A heated debate was had regarding the election costs. The Chair stopped the debate at that point.

125. Sub Committee/ working group reports:

a. Local Government Reorganisation: Item discussed in Town Council meeting previously.

b. Environment Committee: The next meeting is scheduled for 5.30pm on Tuesday 28th April. Leek Neighbourhood Matters representatives are attending to talk about dog fouling issues in Leek. All councillors are invited.

126. Ward Reports:

a. Leekbrook:

- The Wardle Estate **Residential Management Group (RMG)** called a meeting of estate residents at Westwood Golf Club on 24th March and over 50 attended. The meeting was designed to invite one or more residents to join the board but as the meeting was so badly informed, another meeting date is to be arranged.

b. Birchall:

- **Former Britannia HQ building:** Cllr. Wales reported that residents are concerned about what the building by the roundabout (previously Britannia) could become as it is currently up for sale.
- **Birchall Pavilion:** Cllr. M. Swindlehurst, cabinet member for Leisure and Tourism, reported that Birchall pavilion during the closure of Brough Park, has been used for many fitness classes. The new Leisure Centre is on course to re-open at Brough Park. Discussions are taking place to keep Birchall Pavillion open as a venue and to improve, catering and toilet facilities. It will be a better space to be used by football clubs and a flexible social space for community groups to hire.

c. Leek North:

- **John Hall Gardens:** The charity Rethink 'for everyone living with mental illness' are ceasing funding of their project at John Hall Gardens and the café and facilities will close in June. The business case is with SMDC officers to find a way to keep the walled garden and social spaces open.
- **Best Kept Village Community (BKVC)** Your Housing have offered to support the Haregate project. The donation could be used for plants and a possible new notice board for Haregate.

d. Leek South:

- **Britannia Street** bollards are now in place. The slabs are soiled so street cleaning has been booked for the area.
- **Speed Cameras at Ladderedge:** The police restoring speed cameras on Ladderedge. County Councillor Bob Egerton has been asked to supply new speed notices.

e. Leek East:

- **Sparrow Park** paving needs cleaning and the benches require repair. Graffiti needs removing. It was suggested that the Clerk makes a list of problems which are raised in the town and these matters need to be reported and actioned.
- **Road disintegration adjacent to the Monument:** The state of the road outside the monument is to be reported. County Councillor Sonny Edwards needs to be kept informed of all the complaints and reports logged.

Cllr Worthington left the meeting.

f. Leek West:

- **Big Mill:** Cllr. Webster reported on the devastating fire at Big Mill. It was a relief that no one had been injured as a result of the fire.

- **Potholes** have been reported and fixed on Grove Street.
- **Action West End** event organisation is progressing steadily.
- **St Stephens Square:** No progress to date.

127. To receive other items for information or future agendas:

- Social Prescribers** have asked if the Town Council could host regular networking meetings to bring together organisations to share community knowledge and to identify gaps for services. This would involve organising agendas and minutes and the cost of room hire. The Clerk is getting a quotation from SMDC for meeting room hire.
- Work experience:** A student from Westwood College has written to ask about a work experience opportunity. It was decided that the officers do not have time to supervise a student at this time. The opportunity was offered to councillors who may have a project they would help with. Please contact the Clerk as soon as possible if interested so the college can be informed.
- Pride in the Moorlands** committee have asked for help with event logistics (barriers and road closure procedures) for the parade to be held in Leek on Sunday 28th June. Item to be moved to the TEC Committee. If community groups are using the Town Council Lengthsman they need to pay for his time.

128.Exclusion of the Public:

The Chairman moved: “That in accordance with section 19 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business next to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting”.

Members of the public left the public gallery at 8.25pm

129. Confidential items:

- 15 Stockwell Street:**
No progress has been made seeking legal advice about office service charges and a lease.
- Bank House:**
Commercial Lease negotiation is still in progress.
- Allotment Boundary:**
Some asbestos needs to be removed before work can proceed. Progress has been made in negotiation to remove the previous boundary fencing. Legal advice is being followed through the process.
- Nicholson War Memorial:** Correspondence has been sent to Leek Lands Trust asking for land ownership clarification.

Meeting ended 21.05

ACTIONS

Person responsible	Action	Task Description
Cllr. Worthington	Contact Ashbourne TC	How do they maintain their high standards of public toilets
Clerk	Neighbourhood Plan time sheet	A log to be kept of time spent on administration
Clerk	Log of problems raised to the Town Council	Record action taken and dates of the completion
Clerk	Report the road surface	Nicholson Monument
TEC Committee	Request from SM Pride for TC help	To use TC barriers for the Pride event on 28 th June and marshal support knowledge