

Leek Town Council

Leek Town Mayor
Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst



Leek Town Council
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TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES Tuesday 19th May 2026

7.00pm, Council Chamber, Moorlands House

6. Welcome

Mayor Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst	Deputy Mayor Cllr. Keith Hoptroff	Cllr. Paul Powner
Cllr. Steve Ford	Cllr. Stephen Wales	Cllr. Derek Hilyer
Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst	Cllr. Sue Webster	Cllr. Kate Nicholls
7 Members of the public	Staff: Victoria Johnson	Minutes: Clerk Denise Wheat

7. **Apologies:** Cllr. D. Young, Cllr. B. Cawley and Cllr. M. Worthington

8. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests** and other Interests and consideration for the granting of dispensations. **None declared**

9. **Mayors Announcements:** No announcements received in the first week of Mayoral office.

10. **a. Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 21st April 2026** were approved
Proposed – Cllr. M Swindlehurst – Seconded – Cllr. Hilyer, vote 7 in favour, 2 abstain.

b. Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 12th May 2026 were deferred to the June meeting to be approved.

11. **Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda**

- a) State and condition of the public toilets on Silk Street had been reported to the District Council but no reply had been received.
- b) A response to a letter to SMDC regarding actions about the lead up to the Big Mill fire has not yet been received. This will be on the June agenda.

12. **Minutes of the Planning Committee 28th April 2026** were approved: All in favour

13. **Mayor and Deputy Mayor's Report from their first week in office:**

- a. It was the 20th year of Scooterfest in the town on Sunday 17th May. The event was really successful despite the showers. The Town Council thank Steph and Jean Knott and the whole organisational team from The Jesters Scooter Club for bringing so many visitors into Leek, for putting on the entertainment, and bringing so much trade into the Town Centre. The annual event puts Leek on the map for clubs from all around Great Britain and Europe.
Two visitors, from Leek's twin town of Este came especially for the event.

b. The Mayor announced her two Charities for the year to be:

- i. Communities Supporting Families co-ordinated by the Staffordshire Family Hub
- ii. A new community theatre and drama group, teaching confidence and life skills, based at the Haregate Community Centre (providing it secures the appropriate status).

Attended by the past Mayor Cllr Derek Hilyer

- **22nd April** Dementia Friends Awareness Training
- **25th April** Moorlands District Scouts St George's Day Celebrations
- **30th April** Mills of Leek Heritage Walk
Funeral of Mick Brough, Chairman of RBL (Leek Branch)
- **10th May** Civic Celebration (Rudyard Hotel)

Attended by the Deputy Mayor Cllr Lyn Swindlehurst

- **24th April** Mayor of Stone's Civic Dinner

Outgoing Mayor/Incoming Mayor

- **12th May** Annual Town Meeting and Annual Meeting of Leek Town Council including Mayor Making

Attended by the Mayor Cllr Lyn Swindlehurst and Deputy Mayor Cllr Keith Hoptroff

- **13th May** Moorlands Radio interview and What's On announcements

The Meeting was adjourned for the Public Participation Session

14. Public Participation:

a) Leek Neighbourhood Matters: Angie Balwako

The author of the paper presented to the Town Council regarding the problems that community members have with local preachers in Leek, spoke to the Town Council as follows:

"The paper is the result of approx. 7 months of collating information. Direct observation, first hand testimony from residents, social media content from the preacher's social media and local community pages and trying to understand navigation of complaints to police and council. Let me be very clear there is no objection to free speech or the rights of individuals to express their beliefs, lifestyles or cultures. However, when the rights of an individual impinge upon the rights of others we have issue. Also, when the manner of an individual exercising their rights is intentionally upsetting, causes harm to individuals or businesses and does not cooperate with societal codes of behaviour, we argue that it is antisocial and intentional nuisance and should be managed in accordance with the law.

We have researched legislation and as this type of problem is not isolated to Leek, we have investigated approaches taken by other authorities, their success or failure in management and the potential cost to the public purse, which has in some cases been substantial.

Arguments that preachers like those operating in Leek are guilty of hate speech or public order offences are very successfully challenged by a specialist group of lawyers within a charity organisation. The history of challenges is such that authorities are reticent to act so we need to have absolute clarity if action is to be taken.

In taking away the content of preaching and looking objectively at the behaviour we find a way forward. Nationally, use of antisocial and nuisance behaviour legislation has been used to varying effect. Blanket PSPOs to restrict amplification, affect buskers but still do not address some of the more intimidating behaviours of fire and brimstone preaching. Towards the end of last year we saw

an increase in the use of community protection notices (CPN) to manage those people who's conduct is affecting the well-being of individuals and communities.

When applied with clarity about specific behaviours they have not been legally challenged. CPN's offer a mechanism for structured and explicit warnings to allow individuals to adjust their style of delivery and have now in many cases been formally incorporated into codes of conduct as a consequence of non adherence.

Staffordshire Moorlands code of conduct (Nov23) has not worked it is seen as voluntary and as such can't be enforced. When it was introduced it was implemented with a caveat that a review of effectiveness would be done. A reduction in complaints is not a sign that there isn't a problem - it is a sign that people have found the process ineffective. The public have been bounced between police and district council- each suggesting the other is responsible. And they have been worn down and become despondent

Our view is that behavioural codes for any person in the street should not sit with licencing but with antisocial behaviour teams. Implementation of antisocial behaviour Legislation is the joint responsibility of police and local authority and we believe should have a shared reporting system which is responsive to community input.

Leek Neighbourhood Matters group propose that Leek Town Councillors support a task and finish group to include Police, SMDC, and representation from ourselves as the community voice to review the code of conduct taking into account advice from recognised Christian organisations to ensure religious bias from either side is balanced out. Also, that we take the opportunity to look at reporting mechanisms for antisocial behaviours and application of legislation so that the public have a single point of contact.

We hope that you will, as our town representatives, encourage the district council to fully engage in this process. We have also spoken with the police who are willing to sit at the table to tackle this with us."

A general discussion about anti-social behavior and raising public awareness, in particular dog fouling ensued. Cllr L. Swindlehurst has been working with the district officers to get anti-dog fouling messages out across the Leek North Ward.

Cllr. Cawley is the District Cabinet Member for Communities. The co-working group should be an addition to the Community and Scrutiny panel who already meet at SMDC and not a substitute. The Town Council should write to ask for the matter to be considered by the Community and Scrutiny Committee.

The Council congratulated Leek Neighbourhood Matters on getting involved with Neighbourhood Watch, as the responses on social media show this is working.

It was proposed that co-working with a task and finish group, to find a solution to issues that Leek Neighbourhood Matters have raised, has the Town Councils full support. Bridging gaps, improving positive outcomes and having traceability of reporting systems will hold the different authorities accountable for their role in resolving the problems.

Proposed Cllr. M Swindlehurst – Seconded Cllr. Stephen Wales – Unanimously all in favour

a. Leek and District Civic Society: Roger Warrillow

20mph where pedestrians predominate is accepted all over the world so why not in Leek?

Leek is a small market town where roads have evolved over 700 years, with no by-pass.

In the past 7000 signatures were collected in support of a 20mph speed limit. The Leek and District Civic Society ask for the Town Councils support to trial 20mph on Stockwell Street.

Previous large commercial planning developments in the town promised a crossing and other road layout enhancements such as a crossing opposite the Nicholson Institute, Library and College.

There are 5 exits and 6 entrances onto Stockwell Street. A great amount of funding has been spent on improving the public facilities of the museum, library, college, markets and the leisure centre. All these investments have roads and car parks leading into Stockwell Street. It is one of the main through routes of the Town. The junctions are difficult to get out of. If the speed was lower this would make egress safer and easier to maneuver. Stockwell Street is uphill or downhill with blind spots. Traffic accelerates too fast in both directions. 20mph traffic speed would free up congestion and keep pedestrians safer.

We have been let down by County Highways but if District and Town Councillors voted for the safety of a 20mph speed limit in Leek it would happen.

But nothing will be done if Councillors do nothing to support the people of Leek in this quest for the safety of all.

Councillors discussed delays around the lights at the bottom of Stockwell Street. The filter light was taken off, and this has restricted the traffic flow. Drivers are frustrated and are bypassing the junction by going up Derby St. and along Market St. which is resulting in more cars in the Town Centre, Sparrow Park and Derby St. causing more pedestrian risk in the shopping street.

A one-way system around Leek has been discussed in the past. There are not enough pedestrian crossings, poor road surfaces and poor road markings.

Cllr. Ford asked if there could be an overall review of the road structure and a measure of the volume of traffic. The matter needs to be referred to the County Councillors.

Cllr. L. Swindlehurst referred to the 20mph project in Wales – The Welsh government have a national mandate for the 20mph on the roads in Wales. Funding at County is provided for maintenance of the roads and not necessarily for safety. Research shows 51 road collisions occurred in 2024; 5 serious collisions but no fatal accidents thankfully. The County spend 28.3 million pounds a year prioritized for highway repairs and maintenance.

Cllr. Wales responded that there have been 2 fatalities in more recent years.

The Council proposed that the Clerk arranges a date for a site visit with Cllrs. Kelly, Edwards, Egginton and Town Council representatives to look at the problems and make a list of priorities.

15. Dates of forthcoming Meetings and Events:

Tue 26 May	Planning Committee: 10am, Town Council Office Allotments Committee: 10:30am Environment Committee: 5:30pm
Tue 2 nd June	War Memorial Committee: 6pm, Town Council Office Tourism, Events and Community: 7pm, as above
Tue 9 th June	Finance Committee: 5pm, Town Council Office
Thu 11 th June	Twinning Committee: 5pm, (as above) Please note a change from the published agenda
Tue 16 th June	Leek Town Council: 7pm, SMDC Council Chamber General Purposes Committee: as above

Action	Description	Person Responsible
Follow up the report to SMDC	State and condition of Silk St toilets	Clerk
Follow up Big Mill letter	Check for a response form SMDC	Clerk
Co-Working Group	Arrange a working group meeting with LNM/Police/SMDC	Clerk
Town Road System	Arrange a site visit with Cllr. Edwards, Kelly and Egginton	Clerk