



Leek Town Council - War Memorials Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2026

Reports in italics indicate action following the meeting

ROUTINE MATTERS

1 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Present: Cllrs Hilyer (Chair), Hoptroff, Nichols, M Swindlehurst and Young

Apologies: Cllrs Powner and Webster and Richard Benefer

In attendance: Denise Wheat (Town Clerk), Victoria Johnson (Administrative Assistant)

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2026 were approved

3 FINANCE

It was reported that there had been no significant expenditure since the previous meeting

MEMORIALS

4 MEMORIAL WORKS

4.1 Nicholson War Memorial

To note that the door lock is becoming increasingly difficult and needed a locksmiths' attention

4.2 Ball Haye Green Memorial

4.3 Leekbrook Memorial

It was reported that a builder had reviewed the paving at the Leekbrook Memorial but had not yet provided an estimate

It was agreed that a wider range of contractors should be prepared, identifying particularly those that could undertake small jobs at short notice.

5 EXHIBITION IN NWM

It was agreed that the Arts/Conservation officers at SMDC should be contacted again about making historical photographs relating to the NWM should be made available to the Council for use in replacing the exhibition in the Monument.

6 THE SENSORY GARDENS AT SPARROW PARK

It was reported that

- this small garden area is often overlooked, it is not properly maintained, and it could be a valuable asset to the town, enhancing the experience for visitors; it could provide an attractive and interesting starting point to a perambulation via the Nicholson War



Memorial, up Derby Street to the Butter Cross and the Market, across Market Square to the remarkable string of listed buildings that stretch from the Maude Institute, through the former Grammar School, St Edwards Church, its Vicarage and the row of buildings up to the Foxlowe, and then Greystones, and on to the Nicholson Institute. There is increasing awareness of anti-social behaviour around the Sparrow Park and bus station area, particularly

within the Sensory Garden: examples include drug taking, aggressive and offensive behaviour, graffiti and indecent exposure. It appears that CCTV in the area is either not operational or not being monitored or used by the local police. Attempts by the Town Council to prompt SMDC to resolve this situation have not been successful. The creation of interpretation panels at the site would help to resolve the ASB issue.

- At the request of neighbours and of the Community Support Police Officers, and with the approval of Leek Town Lands, the Council has erected fencing across the face of the garden to deter access; the Council had been thanked for this action by both the neighbours and PCSOs.

It was agreed that the removal of the island should be a priority, to help in preventing anti-social behaviour and in anticipation of development of the Interpretation Panels (see minute 7). *No further reports of anti-social behaviour have been received.*

7 SPARROW PARK SIGNPOSTING

It was reported that the War Memorials Committee, in its report to Town Council in June, suggested that possibilities for installing interpretation panels should be explored as should potential sources of grant and sponsorship; neighbours (including the Premier Inn, Cattle Market Cottage and the Cattle Market public house) should be consulted as should the SMDC Tourism department. It was noted that

- trees at the back of the garden should be retained but the ‘island’ in front provided cover for unacceptable behaviour
- high-quality interpretation panels would be a valuable addition to the town’s tourism offer
- whether or not the area was to be developed, effective cctv coverage and perhaps warning notices were needed.

It was agreed that the Council should

- establish whether or not planning permission would be required for removing the island and creating the interpretation display.
- identify local and national funding sources which are concerned with one of more of the following: public safety, tourism, celebrating heritage, town centre heritage, war memorials
- examine the practicalities and cost of the panels and the supporting structure and groundwork
- identify possible funding sources and develop a bid, including deciding on a title for the project.

It was further agreed that

- the project should be driven from the War Memorials Committee (although the tourism and anti-social behaviour aspects were of interest to the TEC Committee and the planting was relevant to the Environment Committee).
- it should be completed (or at least be substantially progressed) by May 2027
- include panels at the apex of the horseshoe, mounted on the current low stone wall, of perhaps 18 feet in length, up to 6 feet high (that is 2 feet of stone wall plus 4 foot panels on top), suggesting 6 panels of 3 foot wide
- utilise a framework or wall on to which the panels would be affixed (allowing for replacement over time)
- panels should be mounted in such a way that the stone wall could not be used for sitting
- materials should be suitable for younger visitors
- issues of accessibility should be borne in mind
- the space left by the removal of the island should be paved to a heritage standard
- Councillor M Swindlehurst should explore costs etc at a similar project at the Froghall tramways.

It was suggested that

- the panels could consist of an illustrated map of the town and areas around, graphic (as distinct from textual) information about the town, and commissioned art work on the theme of Leek and the Moorlands
- plastic panels (as used in the NWM plinth) would be cheaper, easier to clean/maintain, replace over time than metal, slate etc
- the space behind the panels should not be accessible to the public but the shrubbery there and in the rest of the area should be enhanced

8 BARRY BIRCH MEMORIAL COPSE AT BALL HAYE GREEN

It was reported that

- a bid had been made to the Woodland Trust containing the following
The planting will be on the Ball Haye Memorial Grounds (Ball Haye Road, Leek ST13 6PP) which is, with a war

memorial arch, the site of remembrance for the fallen in the Ball Haye area of Leek, Staffordshire. It is roughly 1km x 1km and is largely grassland, with a circular pathway, used by the neighbourhood for walking and non-league children's football games (with temporary goals).

Ball Haye Green is an area within the town's major housing (formerly council-) estate. There is a project to substantially enhance the green spaces within Haregate/Ball Haye Green (the Leek North Ward) which includes a site for Nature in Your Neighbourhood (at Ball Haye Green), improved community planting and developing a piece of wasteland for allotment use by a mental health charity. The project is bought together as Leek North Naturally. The planting of approximately 30 trees will be divided between 3 sites on the Ball Haye Green field, collectively in memory of a former Mayor Cllr Barry Birch.

The field is part of the Town Council's estate and is maintained by the Lengthsman who will monitor tree growth and ensure appropriate watering and care. The field has wide community support and hosts the Leek North youth football initiative which was initiated by the late Cllr Barry Birch, well-loved mayor and landlord of a local public house - the copse will be his fitting memorial.

- Woodland Trust replied informing us that the application had been successful: the trees will arrive in November and we'll be in touch closer to the time with more information about your delivery.
- the Woodland Trust allowed for the planting, in total about the size of a tennis court, to be split up (in this case into three groups)

It was agreed that work should be undertaken to check on planting and tree care, including taking advice (eg from Moorlands Climate Action) and involving the community in the planting and care of the trees).

EVENTS

10 REMEMBRANCE DAY AND OTHER MEMORIAL EVENTS

It was noted that the ceremony on Remembrance Day is essentially the responsibility of the Town Council whereas individual commemorative days are the responsibility of the RBL and Armistice Day is organised by St Edwards Church.

It was reported that

- talks were in hand to secure stewarding, catering had been arranged, security and first aid would be reported to the next meeting
- there were discussions with possible donors.

It was agreed that

- the Committee should ensure that hymns used are likely to be known by those attending the event
- there should, if possible, be a live band and bugler for the ceremony (it was hoped that, as usual, the Salvation Army band would play before the ceremony and the Scout band would lead the procession)
- Meetings with RBL and church should be arranged as soon as possible as should a request for armed service involvement

11 TOURS OF THE NWM

It was reported that a tour of the Monument had taken place on 2 August and the next had been planned for 6 September: there had been 60 visitors in August (*but only 12 in September*). *Guides on duty had expressed a willingness to serve not only in October but also (unlike previous years) in November.*

12 ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

It was reported that a public meeting on 19 September would encourage greater involvement in the RBL and the opportunity would be taken to speak with Anthony Frith the RBL County Chairman to identify ways in which the Council could support such strengthening of the British Legion in the district.

13 SILENT NIGHT

Please note that the repetition of Silent Night (the film event in the NWM previously laid on under the auspices of the Outside Arts' 24 Doors (Advent) Event) was not discussed but should

be explored.

PUBLICITY

14 WEBSITE

To report that Rob Povey has written to the Council about the Friends of the Nicholson War Memorial website (nicholsonmemorial.org.uk) which he has very kindly been hosting (and bearing the cost) for some years.

It was agreed that Mr Povey's kind offer to continue maintaining the Friends website would be gratefully accepted, with the Council bearing the costs. A link between that website and the Council's own would be established.

15 COMMUNICATION

It was agreed that there should be publicity about NWM tours, Remembrance and Armistice Days, and RBL ceremonies at the Monument

DNM

16 It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be **6 October 2026**

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

17 TITLE TO LAND AT THE NICHOLSON WAR MEMORIAL

It was reported that the Council's solicitor is awaiting a proposal from the Leek Town Lands Trust about the land around the Nicholson War Memorial

18 Title to Ball Haye Green

It was reported that there was a lack of clarity about the title to the Ball Haye Green memorial grounds but that what evidence there is suggests that the Town Council owns the former toilet block (which would make useful storage space). Discussions were continuing with SMDC, and advice was being taken from solicitors

19 Budget for 2027-28

It was agreed that it might be necessary to include in the 2027-28 budget (and possibly precept) allowance for the Sparrow Park Signposting Panels and for securing and making useful the storage (formerly toilet) block at Ball Haye Green, should one or both of these projects not have been completed in the current year.