Leek Town Council - War Memorials Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2026

ROUTINE MATTERS

1 ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Present: Cllrs Hilyer (Chair), Nichols, Webster and Young
Apologies: Cllrs Hoptroff and M Swindlehurst and Richard Benefer
Attendance: Victoria Johnson (Administrative Assistant)

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2026 were approved

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS: it was reported that

- A Staffordshire County RBL meeting had been held on 19 September at the SMDC offices with an invitation to "find out about the support available and how to get involved with the RBL in the Staffordshire Moorlands": unfortunately, it made little progress in seeing a way forward for the small and somewhat disconnected branches and nor did it give assurance that the Leek Branch (BR3153) would become properly constituted in the near future: the Council's willingness to help in resolving the problems was repeated.
- According to the current Leek Town Council asset list it appeared that the Council owns the war memorial in the St Edward the Confessor Church yard: the implications of this should be explored with the church.

4 FINANCE

It was reported that there had been little expenditure in the preceding month.
It was agreed that provision (possible £10,000) for removing the Sensory Gardens island should be considered in setting the 2027-28 budget/precept.

MEMORIALS

5 **MEMORIAL WORKS**

It was reported that

- Nicholson War Memorial: the lock had been repaired; plans were in hand for the lengthsman to paint the door; the storeroom would be cleared of unnecessary material (*now cleared)* to ensure that the three poppy panels could be stored there.
- Ball Haye Green Memorial: planning for the Barry Birch memorial tree planting, and for the care of the trees, was in hand (to be distributed around the periphery rather than in copses) with any unused trees (of the thirty) to be used elsewhere in the area.
- Leekbrook Memorial: it had been difficult to interest contractors in the project to grout the paving, but efforts were continuing.

6 EXHIBITION IN NWM

It was reported that permission had been received from SMDC to use the photograph boards from the centenary exhibition in revising the exhibition within the NWM: ideas would be presented to the next meeting.

7 SENSORY GARDENS

It was reported that

- the fencing erected by the Council to seal off the Sensory Gardens (to deter anti-social behaviour) had remained in place for some time but that the tie's linking the panels had been cut: a local neighbour had kindly reinforced the connections with a locale chain.
- Development of the interpretation installation (see below) had three main purposes: to prevent anti-social behaviour; to improve information for tourists; to pay respect to the town's heritage, including but not exclusively the Monument.

It was further reported that, regarding replacing the Sensory Gardens with a Sparrow Park signposting installation

- A title for the project was urgently needed
- The six panels envisaged (4 feet high by 3 feet wide) would cost around £1,000
- Contractors were being contacted about creating a wooden framework on which to mount the panels together with fencing/railing to seal off the shrubbery behind
- the main project will be broken into tasks, to be completed by April 2027: commission/invite tenders for artwork, secure the panels; erect the framework/fencing; flatten the island shrubbery; improve the main shrubbery.
- Two of the panels would be original art work, one would be a largely graphic map of tourist Leek and the other two would be about the town, again in largely graphic form – all could be updated/replaced easily;
- Bids were being prepared for the panels and the framework and a process for designing the panels would be considered at the next meeting
- It will then be necessary to decide how to treat the island, by either removing it and repaving the area or replanting with low growing plants so as not to impede the installation – this may be a project for 2027-28

EVENTS

8 REMEMBRANCE DAY (8 NOVEMBER 2026)

It was reported that

- The Deputy Lieutenants attending Remembrance Day will be Admiral Sir Trevor Soar (NWM) and Mrs Judy Scott-Moncrief (BHG)
- 30 members of the 16th Royal Signals Regiment (Stafford) will be in attendance
- There will be three representatives from our twin town of Este
- The Chair of Staffordshire RBL has been invited to join
- The 5th Leek Scout Band will take part in the parades to the NWM (and possibly BHG)
- It was hoped that a band will play for hymns at the NWM ceremony
- The Chair of Staffordshire RBL has been invited to the NWM event.
- Stewarding and keeping the event to schedule will be improved by holding the stewards meeting in Silk Street
- Liaison between stewards and the timing of the parade will be improved.
- Meetings will be held with the Leek RBL and the Rev Nigel Irons about the event, particularly around timing, about who will perform the act of dedication, whether or not a bugler will be in attendance: Cllr Hilyer will call the wreath layers with the Town Clerk/Deputy acting as marshalls.

It was agreed that three poppy panels would be used for Remembrance/Armistice Days but that only one would be used for other events.

9 WAR MEMORIAL TOURS

It was reported that

- the tour of the Monument in September only attracted a dozen visitors whereas there were about 60 in August; guides are available for tours in both October and November (first Sunday) and another volunteer had come forward; consideration should be given to starting again in April 2027.
- Colin Agar would be conducting a Commonwealth War Graves tour at Leek Cemetery on 25 October.

10 ILLUMINATION OF THE MONUMENT

It was reported that

- the Monument was illuminated in red as a sign of respect on the day of the funeral of Margaret Lovatt, Mayor of Leek in 1999-2000.
- Efforts were being made to extend access to both members of the office staff and the chairman (noting that the lights have to be changed at the Monument, after nightfall)

It was agreed

- To accede to a request from Leek Rotary for the Monument to be illuminated for World Polio Day (24 October - an international observance dedicated to educating the public about poliomyelitis (polio), honouring the progress made through vaccination, and highlighting the work of health workers and organizations on the front lines, such as the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) led by WHO, Rotary International, and UNICEF)
- That the schedule for illuminating the monument should also include marking the death of past mayors and of serving councillors

PUBLICITY

11 CELEBRATING THE CELEBRATION

It was reported that progress with making a permanent record of the events of the Centenary Year including the parade, ceremony and exhibition, the echoes of that day at the Civic Service, and the Remembrance Day ceremony was ongoing.

12 WEBSITE

It was reported that progress with working with Rob Povey to update the Friends of Nicholson War Memorial web site and on integrating it with the Council's site was ongoing.

13 COMMUNICATION

It was agreed that articles should be drafted for both the Leek Post and Tims and the SMDC's IN-Touch magazine to reflect developments regarding remembrance in Leek (taking in contributions from other committees as appropriate)

DNM

14 It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be 3 November 2026.